

# WHY DON'T YOU GIVE ME SOME LOVE?!

An anthropological examination of the intimate relationship between volunteer tourism and jineterismo in Cuba

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## **Abstract**

This anthropological research project explores the relationship between voluntourism (the travel which includes volunteering for a charitable cause) and the socio-economic phenomenon of jineterismo (the ‘riding of tourists’) in Cuba by using a case study of a volunteer brigade. Whereas volunteer tourists engage in this type of travel in search for authenticity in their capitalistic existence, Cuban jineteros overwhelmingly seek further incorporation into capitalism and a way out of pressure to conform in the Cuban socialist society. Despite the reverse interests in these encounters, it argues that both voluntourists and jineteros share an interest in cross-cultural experiences and making friends from afar. Hence, to understand this paradoxical interrelatedness, this thesis focuses on the nature of relationships between Cubans and tourists, and questions the role of intimacy and instrumentality within volunteer tourism by moving beyond the existing stereotypes in sex and romance tourism. It examines the narratives and intentions of both actors involved in jineterismo and voluntourism in touristic Cuba. It studies how the volunteer experience can be transformed through jineterismo. Situated against a backdrop of anthropological notions of sentimentality, compassion, affect, morality, and romanticization, it analyses how philanthropic gift-giving is applied to both voluntourism and jineterismo.

### **Key words:**

jineterismo, voluntourism, intimacy, solidarity, gift-giving, Cuba

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## List of Abbreviations

CDR	<i>Comités de Defensa de la Revolución</i>
CIJAM	<i>Campamento Internacional Julio Antonio Mella</i>
CUC	<i>Cuban Peso Convertible</i>
CUP	<i>Cuban Peso (Moneda Nacional)</i>
DMC	<i>Destination Management Company</i>
EUR	<i>Euro</i>
ICAP	<i>Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos</i>
ICS	<i>Iniciativa Cuba Socialista</i>
MINREX	<i>Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations</i>
MINTUR	<i>Cuban Ministry of Tourism</i>
NGO	<i>Non-Governmental Organization</i>
OFAC	<i>Office of Foreign Assets Control (of the U.S. Department of the Treasury)</i>
PRC	<i>Cuban Revolutionary Party</i>
PCC	<i>Partido Comunista de Cuba</i>
UNESCO	<i>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</i>
U.S.	<i>United States</i>
USD	<i>United States Dollar</i>

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## Foreword

Only a few years ago, in 2014, I was about to graduate from my undergraduate studies in tourism and leisure management. To complete my degree, I had to do a professional internship in Belgium or abroad. Passionate about sustainable tourism and Latin American culture, I chose to go to Ecuador where I worked for a local non-governmental organization (NGO) hosting British volunteers on their gap year as a volunteer group leader. As I was wildly enthusiastic about volunteer work, I was offered a position of project coordinator and group leader in Cambodia for a British organization. Consequently, I worked again with volunteers during that summer.

Gradually, however, I started to notice that the sincere but naïve generous and charitable efforts of voluntourists had many implications. First, they did not have as much impact as they had hoped for, and secondly, their altruistic ambitions appeared to have an obvious egoistic profit-oriented notion as well: they mutually benefited from the situation by *finding themselves* and growing as a person through the voluntouristic experience, while the local communities were often left with less beneficial development aid than aspired. Moreover, communities were expected to be reciprocating the voluntourists' intervention with a glimpse in their authentic local culture (which mass tourism failed to do), and so on.

Likewise, I was astonished by the challenges I faced as a group leader negotiating the encounters between voluntourists and their hosts. Not only were language barriers and cultural differences hard to overcome, but relationships were also always measured by difference, power and inequality. Within this volunteer tourism experience, I was confronted with neo-imperialist and humanitarian perspectives of volunteers who were eager to *change the world*. I also came across ambiguous aspirations of locals and voluntourists. One of the issues that kept raising questions and misunderstandings was the relationship between both actors. In many conversations, I



could feel that their intentions were contradicting, and that the perception of their relationship with each other was not neutral and experienced very dissimilar.

Determined to gain deepened understanding, I decided to return home to Belgium and make sense of it. I started to study anthropology to learn about the social and cultural issues which I was not able to grasp at all. At the time I am writing this thesis (3 years later), I am about to finish another journey that has brought me the answers that I would like to share in this thesis. I could not have imagined a better way to instigate awareness and understanding about volunteer tourism and the politics behind cross-cultural human relationships than by studying social and cultural anthropology.

A few personal factors (such as my ability to speak Spanish and my personal interest in the Caribbean as a geographical area) as well as a mix of interesting socio-economic and political factors have resulted in my decision to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in Cuba. In this socialist island nation, volunteer tourism is organized through *volunteer brigades* by the government since the 1970s. Moreover, economic hardship in Cuba led to a particular type of negotiating relationships between tourists and locals – called *jineterismo* – during the Special Period in the 1990s. Therefore, I found that Cuba offered an excellent case study to research the intimate relationship between volunteer tourism and the politics of reciprocity in relationships with local communities in developing countries.

# 1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

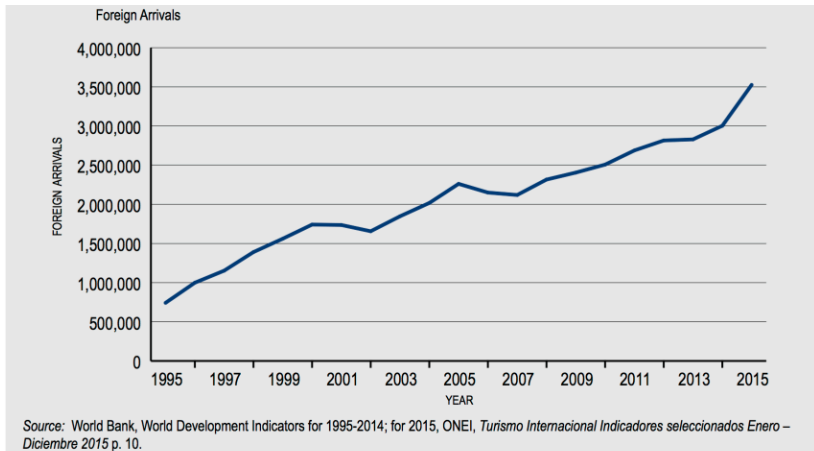
## 1.1 Problem Statement

Cuba is a unique island nation. For most tourists, it is a fascinating holiday destination as the Cuban way of life is both inspiring and frustrating at the same time. For many anthropologists, the country offers a rich and intriguing culture to explore. Although Cuba is officially categorized as a third world country, it has a healthcare system that can be compared to those of richer countries. The average life expectation is 76,5 years old and its child mortality rate is even lower than that of the United States. The very ethical ideology of the Cuban Revolution translates itself in one of the best social security systems in the world. Every Cuban has the right to free education resulting into a high education level, and – according to the government – nobody lives in absolute poverty. Lots of attention is paid to culture, music and sports, causing Cuba to score high at this level. Because of these unseen social achievements, Cuba can be seen as an example in its battle against neoliberal capitalistic globalization (Demuyne & Vandepitte, 2008; Liekens, 2005).

Simultaneously, Cubans face economic hardship and scarcity. Already since 1960, the country is U.S.. After the collapse of the Soviet Union – Cuba’s most important trading partner – in 1991, the government has therefore turned to international tourism to combat this devastating period of economic hardship: *The Special Period in Times of Peace*.<sup>1</sup> Although unemployment is rare and each Cuban has the right to free basic food, education and health care, there remains a gap between economic and socio-cultural development, which frustrates Cubans (Vanbrabant & Demuyne, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> Recent statistics indicate that foreign arrivals in Cuba have indeed increased significantly over the past 20 years rising from less than one million in 1995 to more than 3,5 million in 2015 (see Figure 1). Most tourists come from Canada or Europe (Feinberg & Newfarmer, 2016).



*Figure 1: Waves of Foreign Arrivals in Cuba (Feinberg & Newfarmer, 2016)*

Moreover, Cuba is a socialist nation with a planned economy and state-run enterprises following communist ideologies. Although the system is spoiling its citizens at a social level, it bereaves them from their willingness to work: a Cuban that works for the regime earns much less than a Cuban that works in the tourist industry. This economic gap messed up Cuba's social pyramid.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the country is divided in two worlds with upper-class areas for tourists and under-class areas for locals, especially because the authorities tried to separate these two worlds by enacting *tourist apartheid* (Demuyne & Vandepitte, 2008; Gmelch, 2012; Liekens, 2005; Loumann, 2011; Spencer, 2010).

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<sup>2</sup> A Cuban who works in the Cuban tourism industry does not necessarily has a higher monthly wage, but generally earns much more because of the tips given by tourists.

Apart from the authorities' monopolization of tourists' expenditure, Fidel Castro's idea to concentrate tourism in Varadero and Havana to protect its impact on Cuban society also involved in *tourism apartheid*: the segregation of Cubans and tourists. However, the state could not avoid Cubans to notice the establishment of luxury infrastructure and consumption. This has led to the subversion of Cuba's social fabric and challenges the revolutionary ideals (Fernández, 1999; Schwartz, 2003; Simoni, 2016; Vanbrabant & Demuyneck, 2010).

Moreover, tourism resulted in negative impacts, such as prostitution, and corruption. As the peso – the currency in which Cuban wages are being paid – became almost worthless over time, the purchasing power of Cubans is very low. This resulted in the ability of high-educated Cubans to earn up to ten times more money working in touristic environments – e.g. as taxi drivers – as they could access foreign hard currency which was more valuable.<sup>3</sup> This demotivated Cubans to work and led many of them to illicit 'tourism hustling' activities that are intertwined with romance, potential marriage, consumption and travel, which had a significant social impact. This informal realm of opportunity is known as *jineterismo* (Cabezas, 2004; Carpentier et al., 2008; Simoni, 2016; Vanbrabant & Demuyneck, 2010).<sup>4</sup>

A positive answer to these problematic dynamics has been formulated by ICAP, the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples. This organization is offering solidarity programs for decades to tourists who seek an alternative travel option to grasp the

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<sup>3</sup> Cuba's local currency is the peso: *moneda nacional* (CUP). Since 2004, the currency for tourists is the CUC: *peso convertible*, which has replaced circulation of the US dollar on the island (Carpentier et al., 2008).

<sup>4</sup> *Jineterismo* refers to the broad range of (illegal) activities related to tourism in Cuba and behaviors associated with hustling, including, but not limited to, sex for cash (Fernández, 1999). In Chapter 2, I further discuss this term.

uniqueness of Cuba while volunteering and *giving back* to this socialist society.<sup>5</sup> Tourists who want to express solidarity with Cuba's 'revolutionary battle against imperialism' can participate in brigadas internacionales (volunteer programs) to express their solidarity with Cuba's exceptional societal structure while maintaining friendship bonds with the island (ICAP, 2016). I refer to this type of *solidarity tourism* (Spencer, 2010) or *development tourism* (Salazar, 2004) as *voluntourism* (volunteer tourism).<sup>6</sup>

From an anthropological perspective, their nonmaterial form of social solidarity can however be questioned in its very self as it is marked by fundamental asymmetries of power and privilege: what is it that you give? How much can you actually give? What should you give? And very importantly: if we consider Marcel Mauss' (1969) theory that there is no such thing as a free gift, then what do these tourists expect in return? This thesis also examines the ways in which gift-giving, morality, intimacy, and affect are being used by Cubans as an advancement strategy for economic development, while trying to take advantage of the global linkages that exploit them (Babb, 2011; Brennan, 2010; Pruitt & La Font, 2010). With Cuba being an economically and politically challenged nation, the ambiguous tendencies between socialism and tourism are important factors if one wants to understand jineterismo and host-tourist relationships in Cuba.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> One should note that currently American volunteer organizations operating in Cuba must have a U.S. Government OFAC License and volunteers need to have authorization for an educational or service exchange program (U.S. Department of State, 2015). Other Western volunteers (from Canada and Europe) travel without these restrictions.

<sup>6</sup> Volunteer tourism, often simply coined voluntourism, is the travel which includes volunteering for a charitable cause (Wearing, 2001). In Chapter 2 I will further discuss this term.

<sup>7</sup> This chapter was adopted from my start report for this master's thesis before conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Cuba and draws heavily on

## 1.2 Research Objectives

The aims of this thesis are based on the basis that few academic studies explore the intertwined relationship between jineterismo and voluntourism, although host-guest encounters have been discussed broadly in anthropological literature.<sup>8</sup> The fundamental purpose of this study is to explore the question: *What is the relationship between the voluntourist's philanthropic aspirations and the socio-economic phenomenon of jineterismo in Cuba?* The study answers this main question by exploring the role of jineterismo in voluntouristic experiences, drawing upon ethnographic data collected during the volunteer program *Solidarity Brigade José Martí* organized by *Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos* (ICAP).<sup>9</sup>

Hereby I wish to emphasize that it is not a study about tourism, but rather an anthropological study about tourism which explores the phenomena through ethnographic fieldwork. This distinguishes it from studies on tourism because it focuses on the experiences of people involved in it. Studying touristic phenomena from an anthropological perspective is important because, as Graburn (1983, 29) already noted in the 1980s:

“Styles of tourism may be leading indicators of fundamental changes which are taking place in a class or national culture, changes which may be latent in the more restricting institutions of the everyday world, because tourism is that short section of life in which people

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this previous work. Therefore, the sections ‘Problem Statement, Social Relevance, and Research Objectives have remained largely unchanged (Rausenberger, 2016a).

<sup>8</sup> Gmelch, 2010, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2014; Nash, 1989; Simoni, 2016; Vrasti, 2012; Wearing, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> ICAP stands for *The Cuban Institute for Friendship between the People*. In Chapter 2, I will further discuss this organization.

believe they are free to exercise their fantasies, to challenge their physical and cultural selves, and to expand their horizons.”

Voluntourism is one of that styles of tourism that plays on the restrictions of everyday life in Cuba, and jineterismo is the result of social, economic, and cultural interactions between Cubans and tourists. Therefore, it is worthwhile studying within the discipline of anthropology.

The thesis explores the aspirations, opportunities, and attained experiences of both Cubans and voluntourists by questioning the role of their engagement across difference and inequality in contemporary touristic Cuba. By examining how relationships between both actors are formed and which aspects are definable in a wider discourse related to solidarity, affect and globalization, the thesis elaborates on what we can learn about Cuban and Western politics.

Through observing these informal encounters, it also considers the occurrence, ambiguous aspirations and impacts of philanthropic gift-giving. The objective of this research is to increase our understanding of social reality by developing explanations of these social forms by critically evaluating both phenomena. This objective was addressed through a mixed-methods research study.

### **1.3 Structure**

In Chapter 2, the main phenomena and organizations used in this study are introduced to provide a conceptual framework of the landscape of voluntourism and jineterismo in Cuba. The review of existing literature then presents a broader analytical view on these topics and emphasizes the relevance of this work within the discipline of social and cultural anthropology in relationship to

solidarity (the political), intimate relationships (the social) and philanthropic gift-giving (the economic).

Chapter 3 describes the methodological considerations adapted for the ethnographic research for this thesis: I discuss how the research was conducted, where the field site was, who the study subjects were, what methods have been used, and how I collected data. Reflexive and ethical considerations are made towards the end of the chapter to highlight the issues which stood in the way of the research and my position in the field influences this anthropological project.

Subsequently, Chapter 4 focuses on the content of the research itself. The chapter starts off with a description of life in the field. Then, it presents the results of the collected data in the field, and discusses the analytical outcomes based on three major topics: (1) the political economy of voluntourism and solidarity work, (2) the sentimental politics behind reciprocity in voluntouristic relationships, and (3) the social life of friendship and love beyond borders of compassion.

The first sections (1) deal with voluntourists' experience of *the real Cuba* and the ideological differentiation between volunteers and *brigadistas*. It also talks about solidarity as a political project within socialism, volunteers' fight for justice and the moral underpinnings of help, consciousness and guilt. Overall, it argues for an examination of the politics of solidarity through the approach of an anthropology of affect.

In the second part (2), attention is paid to philanthropic gift-giving and reciprocity between voluntourists and Cubans while paying attention to the everyday struggle (called *la lucha*) in Cuba to gain an anthropological understanding of these dynamics. It also deals with volunteers' experiences with scams, hustlers, and jineteros



in Cuba. Finally, it nuances these practices through an anthropological analysis of both actors' double moral.

The last sections (3) go into depth about intimate relationships (friendship, romance and love). Before it explores the meaning given to established relationships by voluntourists and Cubans, it tries to grasp what constitutes love and friendship for both actors. By understanding the different motives and explanations (such as romanticization and financial interest), it tries to explain why the intimate becomes commodified into a political economy of love.

Finally, I conclude this thesis by offering an analysis of the connection between the main topics and results that came out of the main data. It does not only formulate answers to the research question, but also critically reflects upon the ethnographic fieldwork. Following this conclusion some recommendations for further research are suggested.

## 2. CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 What is Volunteer Tourism?

Volunteer tourism – often simply coined ‘voluntourism’ – is one of the major growth areas in contemporary tourism (Brown, 2005). It is defined by Wearing (2001, 217) as a niche tourism that “makes use of holiday-makers who volunteer to fund and work on social or conservation projects around the world and aims to provide sustainable alternative travel that can assist in community development, scientific research or ecological restoration”. A voluntourist thus participates in an organized way to undertake holidays with a volunteer component that might involve aiding aspects of society or environment (Brown, 2005).

Voluntourism is a form of solidarity tourism.<sup>10</sup> As Minnaert, Maitland & Miller (2013, 106) argued, “solidarity tourism aims to introduce the tourist to concrete forms of solidarity with the host community. This solidarity can take different forms: the tourist may support a local development project or contribute to a fundraising initiative”. Although voluntourism is thus not necessary synonymous to solidarity tourism, solidarity is an important facet in this type of tourism, because voluntourists typically desire solidarity with people in impoverished communities. Or as Graburn (1980, 64) notes:

“If we are to study the nature of solidarity and identity in modern society, we cannot neglect tourism, which is one of the major forces shaping modern societies and

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<sup>10</sup> Mostafanezhad (2013, 320) also noted that “*As a type of ‘development tourism’, volunteer tourism is at the center of new concerns over the ethical consumption of tourism experiences (Spencer, 2010)*”. In this thesis, I will further refer to volunteer tourism as a niche of development / solidarity tourism. I coin it as voluntourism.

bringing (and changing) meaning in the lives of the people of today's world.”

A ‘voluntourist’ is a tourist who volunteers in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment (Wearing, 2001). This is beneficial to both the participant himself through the intrinsic rewards of contributing to volunteer projects, as to the local community by providing a potential positive longer-lasting impact. The importance given to the altruistic desires over profit motives thus presents voluntourism primarily as an alternative to mass tourism, as a result from an ever increasing ‘guilt-conscious’ society (Callanan & Thomas, 2003; Spencer, 2010).

Although voluntourism has rapidly risen and grown into a popular travel trend over the last decade and academic literature on volunteer tourism has increased significantly since the 2000s, little research has been done to learn how voluntourism affects the attitudes of the *voluntoured*. That is why this thesis examines the relationship between *jineterismo* and voluntourism.<sup>11</sup>

### **2.1.1 Volunteer Tourism in Cuba**

In Cuba, voluntourism operates through governmental institutions. Private enterprises are still prohibited as the socialist country regulates and operates its tourist industry mostly through the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR). However, in recent years, there have opened opportunities to open joint-ventures, but such tour operators likewise must offer people-to-people programs or educational and service learning experiences, also known as volunteer tourism (Feinberg & Newfarmer, 2016).

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<sup>11</sup> This section draws heavily on my start report about this master's thesis (Rausenberger, 2016a).

Overall, the options to volunteer in Cuba are relatively large, but in comparison to other (non-socialist regulated) touristic destinations – such as Costa Rica or Cambodia – where tourism is capitalized, the options are rather limited.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, it must be noted that the government does not consider volunteer work brigades as a form of tourism but rather as a direct form of getting to know the Cuban reality (Puicercús Vázquez, 2014, 33). Nevertheless, as these programs include both volunteer work as touristic activities, I argue that it can be categorized as volunteer tourism. Therefore, I present an overview of the Cuban offer of voluntouristic experiences, with a focus on short-term volunteer options for European tourists.<sup>13</sup>

### **2.1.1.1 Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos**

The Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) is a Cuban governmental organization that organizes various solidarity brigades throughout the year since 1960, shortly after the Cuban Revolution began (ICAP, 2016).<sup>14</sup> ICAP was established to build

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<sup>12</sup> The Lonely Planet Cuba travel guide book has a small section on volunteering options in Cuba in which the authors resume that: “There are a number of bodies offering volunteer work in Cuba, though it is always best to organize things in your home country first. Just turning up in Havana and volunteering can be difficult, if not impossible” (Sainsbury & Waterson, 2015, 509).

<sup>13</sup> As a Belgian citizen myself, I decided to focus on voluntourism for European tourists. There are a number of specific volunteer options for citizens from the U.S. in the form of ‘people-to-people programs’. There also exist long-term volunteer options, such as Witness for Peace, but they require Spanish-speaking volunteers with a commitment of two years (Sainsbury & Waterson, 2015). They are left out in this thesis

<sup>14</sup> Pagliccia (2014, 84) describes ICAP as “an organization that channels most of the international solidarity activities with Cuba. It is a major (but not the only) gateway to Cuba for all international solidarity and friendship

political friendships between Cuba and the world to anticipate counterrevolutionary reactions, mainly by the U.S., and was therefore initiated as an apparatus of state propaganda. The first brigade organized by ICAP was *la Brigada Venceremos* in 1970 for the U.S. The success of this event led to the creation of a larger International Brigade to support the Cuban Revolution and express solidarity through productive volunteer work (Puicercús Vázquez, 2014).

The aim of their volunteer brigades is to let people from all over the world learn about Cuban reality and express solidarity with Cuban people by engagement in sociocultural and agricultural activities (ICAP, 2016). Moreover, as Puicercús Vázquez (2014) described in his book *Brigadistas en Cuba* (according to the author, the only book that deals specifically with volunteer work brigades in Cuba), the aim is more explicitly formulated as “strengthening friendship and solidarity with the Cuban people and its Revolution, fighting - at the same time - against the criminal blockade of the United States towards that small Caribbean island” (Puicercús Vázquez, 2014, 26-27, my translation) and “with the spirit of knowing the reality of the country, not the one that is reflected falsely in the mass media” (28).

In 1972, a permanent infrastructure for the volunteers’ accommodation in Cuba was built by the brigadistas themselves. The place was called *Campamento Julio Antonio Mella* (CIJAM) and

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activities (ICAP n.d.). In a country where solidarity is a national policy, ICAP represents and carries out that policy. In this sense, it is an informal executor of state policy in all matters of friendship links with the external world, but in its administrative and operational functions ICAP is self-financed and autonomous. The head office, based in Havana, has administrative divisions that cover all areas of the world; ICAP has offices in all provincial capitals of the island that operate as hosts for visiting delegations” (as cited in Rausenberger, 2016b).

served to welcome more brigadistas.<sup>15</sup> The idea was to create a specific place to dedicate to solidarity and the *friends of Cuba* who were interested in getting to know Cuban reality. It can accommodate up to 300 persons and is located about 40 kilometres from Havana. The camp site offers dorms with little comfort, shared bathrooms, a canteen, a bar, and is decorated with mural paintings stating revolutionary slogans (see attachment 7.9). Soon after the construction of the camp, ICAP could receive a new brigade consisting of participants from 27 countries: the Julio Antonio Mella brigade (Puigercús Vázquez, 2014).

“El Campamento es el lugar donde se gestan sueños, que luego se hacen realidad, a partir del empeño y el alto compromiso adquirido durante la permanencia de esos amigos y amigas en esa instalación, donde se refleja de manera genuina lo que es la Revolución y nuestra gran vocación solidaria e internacionalista. Que cada año que pase, aunque sea un siglo, tengamos la posibilidad de haberle dicho al mundo que desde el Campamento no han pasado solo 100.000 brigadistas como hasta ahora, sin muchos miles de personas de todo el mundo, de todo tipo de idiosincrasia, ideológicas, razas, procedencia o ingresos económicos quienes confluimos en un solo elemento común, que es nuestro compromiso con la AMISTAD ENTRE LOS PUEBLOS.”<sup>16</sup> - Kenia Serrano, director of ICAP, in Puigercús Vázquez (2014, 160)

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<sup>15</sup> The campsite was named after one of the Cuban revolutionary founders of the Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC) who was murdered at the age of 26 in 1929.

<sup>16</sup> My translation: “The camp is the place where dreams are gestated, which then become reality, starting from the effort and the high commitment acquired during the stay of those friends in this facility, where the Revolution and our great vocation of solidarity and internationalism is genuinely reflected. That every year passes, even a century, we have the

Today, many volunteer work brigades are organized annually. *La brigada de José Martí* (Occidental Europe), established in 1973, became the most numerous brigade in its kind.<sup>17</sup>

As Puicercús Vázquez (2014, 30, my translation) notes: “Another important aspect of international help to Cuba is the so-called ‘*turismo solidario*’ (solidarity tourism), organized mainly by Amistur, the travel agency of ICAP, which designs programs of social interest, relating different aspects of the Cuban society, its history, customs, culture and lifestyle of its inhabitants”. Indeed, the average day of the 3 to 4-week programs of a brigade consist out of volunteer work (agricultural work) from 7 AM to 11 PM, followed by conferences on Cuban topics in the afternoon, and salsa lessons, reggaeton dance parties, or musical concerts in the evening<sup>18</sup>.

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possibility to have told the world that from the Camp not only have passed 100.000 brigadistas until now, without many thousands of people around the world, all kinds of idiosyncrasy, ideological, races, provenance or economic income who have come together in a single common element, which is our commitment to FRIENDSHIP AMONG THE PEOPLES.”

<sup>17</sup> It was named after José Martí (1853-1895), a Cuban writer and activist for the Cuban independence who played a crucial role in the effort Cuba’s revolutionary ideology.<sup>17</sup> Martí was also the founder of the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC) in 1892 (Roland, 2011; Sweig, 2016). As the catalyst of anti-imperialistic national feelings, Martí is thus an important figure in Cuban history, often referred to as “the Apostle of Cuba” (Demuynck & Vandepitte, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Conference topics are dedicated to the Cuban health, educational, economic, and political system, as well as to U.S.-Cuban relations, and presentations by a number of political organizations in Cuba: such as ‘los Comités de Defensa de la Revolución’ (CDR); El Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC); La Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (UJC); La Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC); La Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC); La Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular (ANPP); La Organización de Pioneros José Martí (OPJM); La Federación Estudiantil de Enseñanza Media (FEEM); La Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños

Moreover, all brigades include a sleepover visit to the Santa Clara province to visit the Mausoleum of Che Guevara, amongst others, and optional excursions to touristic destinations in Cuba – such as Vinales and Trinidad – are offered by Amistur (see Attachment 7.4).<sup>1920</sup>

### **2.1.1.2 JAKERA**

Since 2014, the tour operator JAKERA, originally based in Venezuela started to operate volunteer programs in Cuba. According to the website (Jakera, 2017), JAKERA specializes in ‘student programs’ including language, dance, culture, volunteer, and adventure travel. Their programs are sold by various travel agencies worldwide promoting voluntourism, such as Activity International (2017) in Belgium which states that the programs are offered to people between 18 and 30 years old, seven times per year.

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(ANAP); La Unión de Escritores y Artistas Cubanos (UNEAC) (Puicercús Vázquez, 2014, 76).

<sup>19</sup> Amistur is a travel agency under ICAP. It is a Destination Management Company (DMC) for specialized tourism promoting, organizing and marketing tourist products and services for the enjoyment and knowledge of the Cuban reality through direct contact with the Cuban people. A flyer states that: “Amistur Cuba S.A. promotes the Cuban nation’s singularity, beauty and humanism, from a different standpoint, smiling at life and the future through a people-to-people bridge” (Amistur, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> The price for a 3 to 4-week volunteer work brigade program offered by ICAP was 450 CUC in 2016 per person, including accommodation in shared dorms, food (full board), airport transfers, transfers to the activities mentioned in the program, medical first aid services, and a 4-night stay in a touristic center in Villa Clara province. These programs are promoted in various countries by local solidarity organizations (See Attachment 7.7 for a detailed list of these solidarity organizations). In Belgium, for example, the price for the same trip is 820 EUR but includes the services of a Belgian tour leader, travel preparation sessions, and 4 additional days in Havana with Belgian participants after the official end date of the brigade.



The cost of a 6-week program is 2,840 USD and includes accommodation in a *casa particular* (private homestay), half board, 2 weeks of cultural and linguistic immersion in Havana with Spanish lessons, dance lessons, and cultural activities; and excursions to the beach and to Viñales; a two week volunteer placement in Punta Perdiz (Playa Girón) for environmental work to maintain the riff and the beaches (in collaboration with the Cuban Red Cross); and two weeks volunteer work in Havana at a boxing center in Rafael Treje Gimnasio and a youth camp.<sup>21</sup>

The website of JAKERA states that “these volunteer placements will help you connect with Cuban people, understand their culture and history, and give you an opportunity to make a real difference!” and talks about “meaningful volunteering”. According to JAKERA, “this is our busiest program and will give you a good all round feel for what is going on in Cuba today.”.

## 2.2 What is jineterismo?

Jineterismo is a colloquial term that refers to the ‘riding of tourists’ or the broad range of activities and behaviours associated with tourist hustling, including, but not limited to, sex for cash or gifts (Carpentier et al., 2008; Fernández, 1999; Sanchez & Adams, 2010; Simoni, 2014a).<sup>22</sup> According to Simoni (2016), this controversial and contested notion can thus refer to “any activity generating income by way of association with foreigners” (49) and “a range of instrumentally driven relationships” (64).

Jineterismo is also a gendered term and is applied to both men and women, with jineteras perceived as providing primarily

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<sup>21</sup> This price does not include travel costs.

<sup>22</sup> A *jinete*, according to the Oxford Spanish Dictionary, is a horseman or – woman, a rider; and *jinetear* is to ride and to break a horse (Sanchez & Adams, 2010; Simoni, 2014a, 2016).

commodified sexual services and companionship to foreigners. Whereas *jineteras* are more often accused to be prostitutes, male *jineteros* are more likely considered to be street hustlers selling fake cigars, for example (Cabezas, 2004; Fernández, 1999).

Overall, *jineteros* intent to obtain financial and/or material advantages by establishing (intimate) relationships with tourists. Intimacy hereby plays an important role in this phenomenon to result in instrumental exchanges. It must, however, be emphasized that it is much more than sex tourism. A *jinetero* uses very nuanced techniques, such as a look into his local authentic culture to the tourist, and in return for that receives (im)material gifts. Consequently, reciprocity as hospitality/companionship is the return for social status/gifts (Simoni, 2016).

According to Cabezas (2004, 993) “*jineteros* trade in the margins of the tourist economy”. *Jineterismo* is thus very situational and cannot be considered as a fixed identity. The notion also involves morally ambiguous notions about luxury consumption and commoditized exchange. Therefore, *jineteros* can create social identities through processes of objectification (Palmié, 2004; Simoni, 2016). Throughout her book, Kaifa Roland (2011, 97) argues similarly that “*jineteros* are rather nonthreatening hustlers who are merely trying to acquire global capital for individual and family substance”.

Such dynamics are typically found in poorer touristic environments in developing countries where economic shortages drive local people to intimate relationships with tourists because it allows them to access money, consumption goods to display a ‘Western’ lifestyle, or sometimes even possibilities to migrate (through marriage with a tourist).<sup>23</sup> Gifts and intimacy therefore can

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<sup>23</sup> In an earlier version of this master’s thesis (Rausenberger, 2015a), I compared the phenomenon of *jineterismo* with “*Bezness*”, a similar

be utilized as survival or advancement strategies for economic development by the jinetero. It is therefore worthwhile studying how voluntourists – who are typically having closer and authentic interactions with ‘locals’ – and Cubans develop informal (instrumentally driven) relationships, and how – through the impact of a phenomenon such as jineterismo – both actors experience these relationships.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.2.1 Jineterismo in Cuba

In Cuba, jineterismo became an important phenomenon and integral part of the society during the Special Period in the 1990s because of the economic hardship.<sup>25</sup> As I argued, in the introduction, it was precisely the development of a tourism industry that had to be the solution for the economic crisis which made jineterismo rise.

Simultaneously, new media and technologies arrived in Cuba due to increasing waves of globalization which made (ideal) images of *romantic love* spread. Together with a more luxurious lifestyle that tourists showed on the island, it resulted in Cubans wanting to consume too. Such changes affected the intimate domain of social relations drastically over time. The regime suggested various regulations to separate tourists from Cubans (cfr. ‘tourist apartheid’),

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phenomenon in North Africa and the Middle East, in which I described it as following: “The phenomenon Bezness is derived from the German word ‘Beziehung’ (relationship) and the English word ‘Business’ and describes in the broadest sense the business and pretention of love feelings towards Western tourists. The primary objectives of Bezness are a sexual relationship with the tourists and financial or material benefits such as money and in a narrower sense even a residence permit in the home country of the tourist”.

<sup>24</sup> This section was adapted from an earlier version of this master’s thesis (Rausenberger, 2016a).

<sup>25</sup> This was due to the loss of Cuba’s most important trading partner, the Soviet Union, and the economic blockade by the U.S.

but that only resulted in a subtler manifestation of the phenomenon: less as prostitution, more as romance.

Already since the mid 1990s, the Cuban authorities are combatting jineterismo as it is a threat to revolutionary ideals, but attempts to regulate the interactions between Cubans and tourists have been enforced inconsistently, and tourism as an important economic market keeps offering a venue for jineteros, which is an embarrassment for socialist Cuba (Alcazar Campos, 2010; Cabezas, 2006, Jiménez, 2008; Schwartz, 1997). Recently, Simoni (2016, 34) found that jineterismo has been progressively adapting itself by “becoming less visible and relying on subtler tactics to approach tourists”.

Precisely because of the strong contradiction between jineterismo – which contests the ideals of the socialist system – and the voluntouristic programs – which romanticized the socio-political and economic situation in Cuba – I am interested in studying the ambiguous relationship between these two phenomena on the island, and the dynamics they create.

### **2.3 Literature Review**

During the last decades, a number of studies have examined the sexual and romantic relationships between hosts and guests in Caribbean tourism.<sup>26</sup> Simultaneously, several researchers have begun

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<sup>26</sup> Alcazar Campos, 2005; Babb, 2011; Brennan, 2010; Cabezas, 2004, 2006; Daigle, 2015; Fernández, 1999, 2010; Fusco, 2010; Gmelch, 2010, 2012; Herold, Garcia and De Moya, 2001; Hodge, 2005; Jiménez, 2008; Kempadoo, 1999; Maclaran et al., 2005; Pruitt and La Font, 2010; Roland, 2011; Sanchez and Adams, 2010; Schwartz, 1997, 2003; Simoni, 2005, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2016; Smith, 1978; Stout, 2014.

to write about volunteer tourism.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, some authors have been writing about solidarity and gift-giving.<sup>28</sup> Although it is impossible to provide an exhaustive review, this literature study attempts to contribute to this growing body of anthropological written material, by critically examining relevant written sources and by highlighting relevant continuities and discontinuities found throughout this literature review.<sup>29,30</sup>

### 2.3.1 Negotiating Politics & Power in Solidarity

Solidarity through tourism shows a political interconnectedness with moral underpinnings of *doing something good* and *giving something back*. For the voluntourist, this is a way to express moral and ethical concerns, but also a means to accumulate cultural capital (Spencer, 2010). This personal interplay is what Giddens (1991) called *life politics*: a way in which an individual reconfigures his relationship to society by using his identity – and realization of self-image – as a site of political change. Spencer (2010, 95) argued that even though tourists who participate in new forms of solidarity tourism – such as voluntourism – “are not necessarily political pilgrims in search of

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<sup>27</sup> Brown, 2005; Bussell and Forbes, 2002; Callanan and Thomas, 2003; Conran, 2011; Doerr & Taïeb, 2017; Jakubiak, 2017; Monaco, 2016; Mostafanezhad, 2013, 2014; Salazar, 2004; Spencer, 2008, 2010; Vrasti, 2012; Wearing, 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Komter, 2001, 2005; Liekens, 2005; Mains, 2013; Mauss, 1969; McGoey, 2015; Pagliccia, 2014; Pérez, 2014; Veltmeyer & Rushton, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Methodologically wise, I have searched for relevant literature through using search terms such as ‘volunteer tourism’, ‘Cuba tourism’, ‘jineterismo’ and ‘gift-giving’ in the KU Leuven library catalogue as the main key concepts for this literature review. From there, I consulted the bibliography lists of retrieved articles and books to find more relevant literature.

<sup>30</sup> The following sections draw heavily on the literature review that I delivered for the start report about this master’s thesis in June 2016 before conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Cuba (Rausenberger, 2016a).

utopia”, they do show some political sentiment as they are committed to the challenges of Cuban socialism.

The focus of ICAP in organizing international volunteer brigades is thereby not only on development, but also on the political context in which they take place. This type of tourism is used by the government to promote socialism and proclaim participants as “ambassadors for the Cuban cause” (Spencer, 2010, 131). Puicercús Vázquez (2014, 29, my translation) described this in his book as well: “Solidarity with the island extends internationally, stimulated by the commitment of the Cuban Revolution in its struggle against the criminal blockade imposed by U.S. imperialism and its right to exist as an independent, free and sovereign nation”.

In her anthropological work on development tourism in Cuba, Spencer (2010) also pointed out that tourism is highly stratified as it is a marker of geopolitical inequalities: Western travelers are mobile while most Cubans are place-bounded. Spencer (2010) and Simoni (2016) both advocated for the acknowledgement of power structures and striking differences and inequalities in touristic environments. Voluntourists are politicized people who are committed to Cuban solidarity on an intellectual and emotional level, Spencer (2010) argued. Moreover, Simoni (2016, 196) argued that “jineterismo could be defended as a rightful way to get their (Cubans) slice of the tourism cake” by employing their skills to transgress the otherwise insurmountable boundaries of power and inequality.

I therefore argue that volunteer programs offered by ICAP are used as political means to (re)inforce socio-political solidarity by counting on sentimental intentions of the consumers of these programs who are assumed to be acting ethical. As Doerr & Taïeb (2017, 17) noticed, voluntourists also hold powerful moral assumptions:

“Volunteering abroad involves various romanticized notions: the world of cultural Others as an arena of problems to be solved, ...; the notion of ‘the local community’ as a primordial and authentic entity, occluding the fact that local communities are usually heterogeneous with diverse interests; ...; equal partnership between volunteers and the community they work in, occluding the fact that their relationships are hierarchical at various levels; a romanticized conception of what it takes to ‘change the world’; ... and occluding the ways in which this may involve an evasion of political responsibility”.

Such demonstrations of solidarity are, however, perpetuating the unequal relationship between voluntourists and people living in local communities because of the tremendous difference of hierarchical power positions and the illustration of privilege by the volunteer who assume to have that power to *make a difference*. Therefore, relying upon inequality makes it a moral economy that contributes to neoliberalist tendencies: Western benefactors are assumed to hold social goodness and seek to transfer this toward *the impoverished parts of the world*. Hereby, needy Others are seen as incapable of making a change on their own. Therefore, sentimental acts of moral responsibility, relying upon the *First World giver – Third World receiver* discourse, are employed by voluntourists (Conran, 2011; Doerr & Taïeb, 2017, 17; Mostafanezhad, 2013, 2014; Vrasti, 2012).

This finding demanded for ethnographic examination to answer the question of whether solidarity through voluntourism is then a sentimental or political response to development, and which power dynamics are at play in such asymmetrical touristic experiences. My analysis of these questions is presented in Chapter 4.

### 2.3.2 The Ambiguity of Intimate Relationships in Cuba

Research on volunteering has shown that the friendships developed through voluntouristic experiences are deemed to be more important than the volunteering itself (Mostafanezhad, 2014; Wearing, 2001). According to Spencer (2010), solidarity tourists are indeed subjected to a closer personal contact with local people and this influences their affection towards locals. A recent study on volunteering abroad only strengthened these findings: “Empathy with the less unfortunate through crossing socioeconomic borders and interacting with them is increasingly viewed as a goal of volunteer/service work” (Doerr & Taïeb, 2017, 18). The intimate relationship between voluntourists and local people therefore often becomes commodified as an *authentic* experience (Conran, 2011).

Moreover, travel has always been fostered by a widespread romanticization of peoples and places. In their edited volume on volunteering and studying abroad, *The Romance of Crossing Borders*, Doerr and Taïeb (2017, 3), describe this tendency profoundly:

“Romance is at the heart of our travel fever. We romanticize landscapes, people, languages, and the very fact of moving across borders, of encountering and learning something new, of transforming ourselves as well as others. Study abroad and volunteering abroad are fueled by these passions, by this romance. And along with this romantic passion comes other emotions: fear of the unknown mixed with thrilling attraction to its temptations; longing for liberation; yearning to make a difference; guilt about one’s privilege; moral righteousness; and hope for growth, transformation, and enlightenment.”



Whereas voluntourists thus engage in this type of travel in a *search for authenticity* in their capitalist existence, jineteros overwhelmingly seek further incorporation into capitalism and a way out of pressure to conform in Cuban society (Pruitt & La Font, 2010; Spencer, 2008; Vradi, 2012). Although both actors have reverse interests in their encounters (because of the different and largely asymmetrical circumstances under which they become involved in it), both share an interest in cross-cultural experiences and making friends from afar. Sentimentality – specifically intimacy, love and compassion – is thus dominant in these relationships (Conran, 2011; Mostafanezhad, 2014). The meaningfulness of this close contact between local people and tourists in voluntouristic experiences must however be questioned (Spencer, 2010).<sup>31</sup>

The varieties of needs, desires and aspirations that are at play in such engagements foster the emergence of controversies about the relational idioms and challenge the genuineness of friendships and potential romantic involvements between tourists and Cubans.<sup>32</sup> Although some Cuban people are looking for *real* relationships and *true* love, there is an increasing predominance of *relaciones de interés* (interest relations), Simoni (2016) argued. The experience of intimacy therefore has widely variant meanings for *host* and *guest*. The intimacy of the encounter is, however, brought to the foreground, while the commercial nature of the experience is hidden from the voluntourists' point of view (Cabezas, 2004; Mostafanezhad, 2014; Wearing, 2001).

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<sup>31</sup> With intimacy, I refer to hospitality, friendship, love and sexual relationships in this thesis.

<sup>32</sup> Doerr & Taïeb (2017, x) categorize three broad concepts under romance: intimacy “as a courtship process, as an artistic sensibility, and as a kind of fanciful delusion”. In my argumentation, I refer to the same types of relationships whenever I speak about intimacy / intimate relationships.

MacCannell's (1973) sociological theory on staged authenticity in touristic experiences can be a useful starting point in the thesis to examine how developing relationships can be a means for tourists to move to their cherished idea of a *backstage* look into Cuban culture beyond the *tourist bubble*. It can also be a superficial *front* expression of friendliness which sells a seductive fantasy of the loving Cuban that the tourists want to buy. This can be used as a means to hide more *back* instrumental agenda of tourist-oriented sexual-affective moral economies by jineteros employing tactic intimacy (Daigle, 2015; Pruitt & La Font, 2010; Simoni, 2016; Spencer, 2010). Nevertheless, not every liaison between Cubans and tourists can be reduced to jineterismo (Cabezas, 2004; Daigle, 2015). "Far from necessarily contaminating a loving relationship, financial support often plays an affirmative, reinforcing role: money cohabits regularly with intimacy, even sustains it", Zelizer (as cited in Daigle, 2015, 75) argued.

In summary, voluntourism in Cuba is an ambiguous phenomenon which is fostered by inequalities, in which the voluntourists and the voluntoured try to belong to a shared world. According to Doerr & Taïeb (2017), the danger of such a focus on development of intimate connections in voluntourism is that it tends to normalize, obscure and overshadow structural unequal power relations. I therefore questioned the interrelation between romance (and romanticization of peoples and places) and voluntourism, as the discourse of emotional involvement and intimacy is present, but remained unanswered in this literature review.

Through anthropological research on this topic in Cuba, I gained understanding of the meaning behind these human relationships and the intermingling of economic interest, intimate idioms and emotional attachment. I will present my critical thoughts and research results about this in Chapter 4.

### 2.3.3 Gift-Giving & Cuban Understanding of Morality

Solidarity through tourism stresses a moral imperative for tourists to *do something good* and *give back*. It illustrates altruism which is not just about giving money, but giving one's time and Self (Spencer, 2010). In his anthropological theory on reciprocity, Marcel Mauss (1969) argued that acts of gift-giving are at the basis of social solidarity as it creates, sustains, and strengthens social ties (Komter, 2001). Gifts are not merely material instruments with an economic purpose, but also as symbolic vehicles to convey other messages such as power and manipulation, sympathy, morality or emotion.

Likewise, Mother Teresa said once that "it is not about how much we give, but how much love is put in the giving". However, it was Marcel Mauss (1969) who was one of the first scholars who studied the deeper significance of gifts. His analysis on gift-giving in archaic societies is still very valuable in the contemporary world. Many examples – such as The Gates Foundation – have showed us that there is *no such thing as a free gift* and that philanthropy has its price as well (McGoey, 2015). Indeed, Mauss (1969) was right by arguing that society was a cycling gift system, and that gifts always anticipated a counter-service.

In her work on social solidarity, Komter (2005) argued that the main motives to give are affection, power, reciprocity, and self-interest or utility; but in order to speak of a *real* gift, they should be unidirectional without expecting a return gift from the recipient. This is not the case in social relationships, in which gifts are both the creators and the creations, or markers as well as marks, of a social bond. Solidarity can therefore also have negative consequences as it is a vehicle to exercise power.<sup>33</sup> Cabezas (2004) confirms this by stating that gifts erode and confuse the lines between romance and

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<sup>33</sup> She illustrates this with the example of lovers who give abundantly to each other to diminish the insecure status of their relationship.

work, love and money in romantic relationships. Comparably, control over economic resources provides tourists the emotional opportunity for dominance in care-taking of a Cuban friend (Pruitt & La Font, 2010).

Komter (2005) also considered volunteer work as an act of solidarity in the form of giving time and *self* which enables feelings of mutual connectedness and reciprocity as well. Fraternization with poorer locals might result in philanthropic gift-giving, and can – from a guilt-conscious dimension – add a humanitarian dimension to the relationship as the voluntourist wants to help the local escaping poverty (Gmelch, 2012; Pruitt & La Font, 2010). Generally, voluntourism indeed tends to attract likeminded participants who desire to do *more than just traveling* and who are keen compassionate consumers of products that *give back* to society by seeking dialogical encounters with the Other.

Voluntourists often arrive at a new awareness of wealth and materialism, and feel embarrassed or even guilty that they have so much wealth while the host is so *poor*, living in small houses, having limited diets, and lacking many amenities and comforts they are accustomed to. This is an important Western perception created by the idea about happiness being shaped by measures of success and satisfaction by material gain (Gmelch, 2012). Most voluntourists are exposed to levels of poverty that are absent from their daily reality at home, and reactions to this culture shock range from guilt and pity to desire to help (Pruitt & La Font, 2010).

But Cubans also demonstrate solidarity, as they show hospitality toward strangers. This is also an important basis of morality for them. Indeed, Komter (2005, 202) stated that “purely economic exchange is not offering the moral context needed for the coming into existence of social bonds” or in other words: morality and reciprocity are interconnected. In his work on the value of intimacy in touristic Cuba, Simoni (2014b) found that generosity is an

important indication of genuine friendships. We can talk of reciprocity in this context as *jineteros* give their companionship and a glimpse into *the real Cuba* in return for something; be it social status, money, sex, gifts, short-term comforts or invitations abroad (Gmelch, 2012; Simoni, 2016).

Hodge (2005) maintains however, that exchanges are regarded as “help from a friend”, rather than “payments from a trick” by Cubans. To subvert structural inequalities, Simoni (2014a) argued that the tourist must leave the idea of inescapable instrumentality and commit himself, but due to the ambiguous aspirations in relationships, tourists might become engaged in a tactical game of economic maximization and reciprocal exploitation. *Jineterismo* therefore breaks the spell of rationality and morality in solidarity as it changes the gift economy into a real economy.

In summary, gift-giving is thus at its place in this study, because the framework of sentimentality, intimacy and morality serve both parties as they seek to maximize the benefits they derive from the relationship (Pruitt & La Font, 2010). The thesis discusses the social implications of gift-giving and reciprocity in touristic encounters as a privileged platform where forms of intimacy can be acted out. The exchange theory of Marcel Mauss (1969) on giving, receiving and reciprocating economic and symbolic gifts as circulating goods and values to promote ties and bonding between individuals, can help us understand in this context why in a given situation certain forms of touristic transactions emerge (Nash, 1989). This theory will be further applied in Chapter 4.

### **2.3.4 Conclusion**

This anthropological literature study presented a broader analytical perspective on voluntourism and *jineterismo* within the context of solidarity (the political), intimate relationships (the social) and philanthropic gift-giving (the economic). It teaches us that there has

been limited previous research done on the intertwined relationship between jineterismo and voluntourism (in Cuba).<sup>34</sup> However, there are appealing (dis)continuities that overlap in both phenomena. It therefore suggests emphasizing the relevance of this thesis within the discipline of social and cultural anthropology. As particularly sentimentality, intimacy and morality are at the core of informal encounters between Cubans and voluntourists, this study will therefore contribute to an extended knowledge and understanding of both jineterismo and voluntourism in Cuba within the discipline of anthropology.

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<sup>34</sup> Here, I need to note that I only speak about my review on English, Spanish and Dutch literature as I am not able to read other languages.

### **3. CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY & DATA COLLECTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a rationale on the mixed anthropological research methods that were employed to answer the questions of where, who, how, and when to study the main research questions of this master's thesis.<sup>35</sup>

#### **3.1 Research Phases: A Very Brief Overview**

This research project started in academic year 2016-2017 in which I defined the topic and research question, as well as planned the ethnographic fieldwork practically by subscribing to the activities of *Iniciativa Cuba Socialista* (further called ICS) in Brussels. I decided on participating with the volunteer brigade in January 2016, after discussing my motivation for this trip with the chairwoman of ICS. I went to a brunch of ICS in March and met the other participants in June during the preparation day. Consequently, fieldwork was conducted in Cuba during Summer 2016 (from 24 June 2016 until 18 August 2016). The brigade offered by ICAP started 3 July 2017 and ended 26 July 2016. I spend additional time with some voluntourists and Cubans before and after the brigade as well in June, July and August 2016. In academic year 2016-2017 the collected data was analyzed and this master's thesis was written.

#### **3.2 Gaining Access: *Iniciativa Cuba Socialista***

As a Belgian citizen, I first looked for opportunities to do volunteer work as a tourist in Cuba online. There were basically two options: the JAKERA programs which were offered by the Dutch travel agency Activity International, and the ICAP programs which were

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<sup>35</sup> The following section is based on the initial methodological section written for my start report about this master's thesis in June 2016 before conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Cuba (Rausenberger, 2016a).

offered by Iniciativa Cuba Socialista (ICS) (both discussed in Chapter 2).<sup>36</sup>

I contacted the Belgian organization ICS to participate in the (more affordable) volunteer brigade which they offered in the Summer of 2016. During my first contact with the organization, it was immediately clear that there was no possibility to work as a volunteer group leader as there was already somebody hired. However, Isabelle and Stephanie of ICS received me with open arms and accepted my request to conduct research while participating as a volunteer myself after they read my initial research proposal (Rausenberger, 2015a). Although they were initially skeptical about my position as a volunteer / researcher, I was allowed to participate in their program. In return, I offered to become a member of the organization to find out what ICS is and does, and to familiarize with other existing members.

Iniciativa Cuba Socialista (ICS) is a Belgian solidarity movement with Cuba. It was founded in 1992 in response to the sharpening of the U.S. blockade. After having organized several events, ICS started a membership movement in 2004. Currently, ICS has exceeded 800 members who work on a platform which supports the Cuban revolution and which aims to promote the socialist political model by statements such as: “we show Cuba as an example of another, possible world in which not 1% but 99% of the people counts” (ICS, 2017). The anti-neoliberalist movement claims to inform and strive for Cuba’s self-determination and against the blockade. In practice,

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<sup>36</sup> Initially, I contacted JAKERA to ask whether I could work as a volunteer group leader for their international Summer program group, but it was almost impossible to get a contract as all employees must be recruited through the Cuban governmental agencies and obtaining a visa was a slow and demanding process. Participating as a voluntourist / researcher was very expensive for me as I did not have funding available for my ethnographic fieldwork.



ICS is mostly known for its annual political activity *Che Presente* at the ManiFiesta solidarity event, but it also organizes workshops about Cuban topics and campaigns against the attitude of the U.S. (and its allies) by providing daily news and information on Cuban politics.

Another important segment is its organization of *immersive* solidarity journeys and volunteer trips, mainly aimed at young people and syndicalists.<sup>37</sup> The most popular trip is the European volunteer work brigade of José Martí which takes place in the Summer and usually lasts about four weeks. An ICS information guide promotes it as: “definitely another journey: a combination of holiday, encounters and solidarity. The basis is volunteer work: usually a few hours a day” (Carpentier et al., 2008, 27, my translation). The activists also pay a lot of attention to the contact with local people from Cuban social organizations, “unlike the touristic tours”, suggesting that this is not tourism but a socio-political engagement. In brief, the main objectives of this solidarity project are to raise awareness of Cuba’s socio-political reality; to maintain friendship bonds with the island through the Cuban Friendship Institute (ICAP); and to contribute to agricultural activities near Caimito (Cubanismo, 2016).

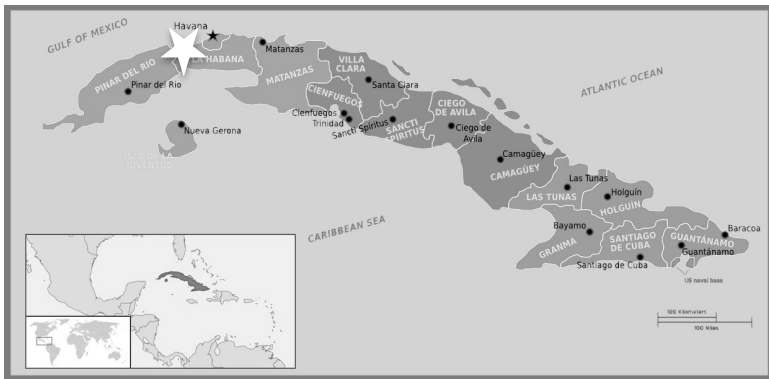
### 3.3 Field Site

As I decided on participating in the José Martí volunteer brigade, the principal field site for this research project was the *Campamento*

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<sup>37</sup> ICS organizes immersive journeys both with and without volunteer work in the programs. The Oxfam-Solidariteit; Fonds voor Ontwikkelings-samenwerking (FOS) - Socialistische Solidariteit Asbl; Christenen voor het Socialisme; and De Vrienden van Cuba journeys do not include volunteer work and are organized for Belgians only. The solidarity journeys in collaboration with ICAP include volunteer work and are aimed at an international target group (Carpentier et al., 2008, 27, my translation).

*Internacional Julio Antonio Mella* (CIJAM) camping site in the municipality of Caimito, located 45 kilometers from Havana (indicated on Figure 2). Here, every year international solidarity brigades take place in large groups up to 300 participants for a duration of 3 weeks. During these brigades, participants also visit socio-historical tourist attractions and communities in cities and municipalities nearby to interact with locals. Also, the groups travel for four days to the province of Santa Clara to visit the mausoleum of Che Guevara and to enjoy the natural scenery near the Hanabanilla lake (see program in attachment 7.4). The brigade ends in Cuba's capital, Havana, with a touristic discovery of the city center and its nightlife.



*Figure 2: Political map of Cuba with indication of Caimito\* (OnTheWorldMap, 2016)*

The other five weeks of my fieldwork had a very different character as they were not fixed or planned. I aimed to use these weeks mainly to stay in contact with Cuban people in and outside of the volunteer brigade to familiarize with their culture, as well as to observe the touristic landscape of Cuba. Eventually, this time was spent in Havana, Varadero, Viñales, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Santiago

de Cuba, Baracoa, and other important locations with a sheer availability of informal encounters between tourists and locals.

Obviously, because it was important that I followed my participants and I was not doing the classic way of single-sited fieldwork, applying the methods of multi-sited ethnography was necessary.<sup>38</sup> In his elaboration on multi-sited ethnography, Marcus (1995, 106) pointed out that one possible way to move where research takes the ethnographer is to *follow the people*.<sup>39</sup>

To conduct ethnographic fieldwork with voluntourists and Cubans while participating in volunteer work brigade is indeed a matter of following a group wherever they go, wherever the program leads, wherever they go out, and wherever they volunteer.

### 3.4 Research Informants

As I participated in the July volunteer program of ICAP, most of my informants were approached via nonprobability sampling. This kind of sampling is appropriate for in-depth studies as it is labor-intensive and focuses on specific topics of which there are only a few cases to find. Moreover, this type of research requires informed informants rather than just responsive respondents so these people were chosen

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<sup>38</sup> Marcus (1995, 105) defined multi-sited ethnography as following: “Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association, or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography”.

<sup>39</sup> Marcus (195, 106) defined *follow the people* as: “... following and staying with the movements of a particular group of initial subjects, staying in touch with one’s informants after they have left the place of the original encounter, meeting and visiting them in their new living environments, and in the places that are meaningful to them. ... the procedure is to follow and stay with the movements of a particular group of initial subjects”.

on purpose, and not randomly (Bernard, 2011; Davies, 2008). Therefore, I used Patton's (2001) method of purposeful sampling.

In first instance, I spent time with voluntourists in Cuba. Hereby, I focused on European tourists as I participated in a European volunteer brigade. Secondly, I worked with Cubans who were (in)formally and regularly involved with these voluntourists. Snowball sampling thereby was a useful technique as a few existing key informants helped to establish connections with more study informants from among their acquaintances (Bernard, 2011). This method was efficient as I did not have previous experiences or existing acquaintances in Cuba myself. I had countless conversations with Cubans I encountered within and outside the volunteer brigade. Their voice is written down throughout this master's thesis.<sup>40</sup>

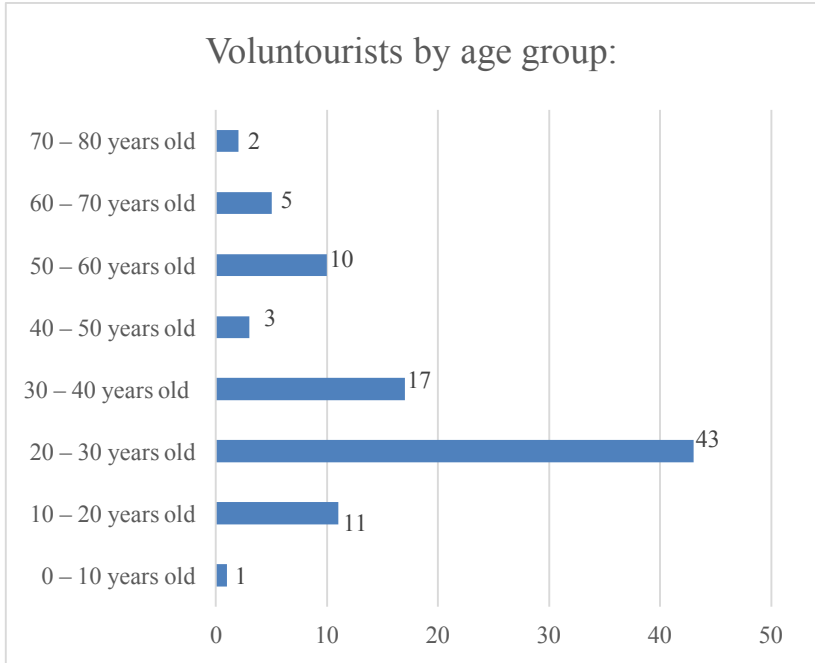
In total, approximately 98 European tourists participated in the volunteer brigade. I managed to collect data of 92 participants from 15 different countries. The average age of the volunteers was 34,79 years old, with the youngest one being 10 years old and the oldest one 77 years old (see Figure 3 and 4).<sup>41</sup> This coincides with the statement of Puicercús Vázquez (2014, 28) who said that "The average age of the brigadistas is 30 years old and a high cultural

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<sup>40</sup> It should be remarked that there is a disproportion between Cubans and voluntourists in this thesis. This can be explained 2 reasons: first, there were less Cubans present in the camp. I estimate that the ratio was 1:5, meaning that there were approximately 20 Cuban staff members for 100 voluntourists. Second, it was not as easy to talk to Cubans as to talk to voluntourists due to governmental restrictions.

<sup>41</sup> Please note that there was only one person of the age of less than 10 years old. This person was an 'outlier' in the data. This participant was the son of a couple that participated exceptionally as a family. It is not common that a minor participates in the brigade as is not pointed towards this target group.

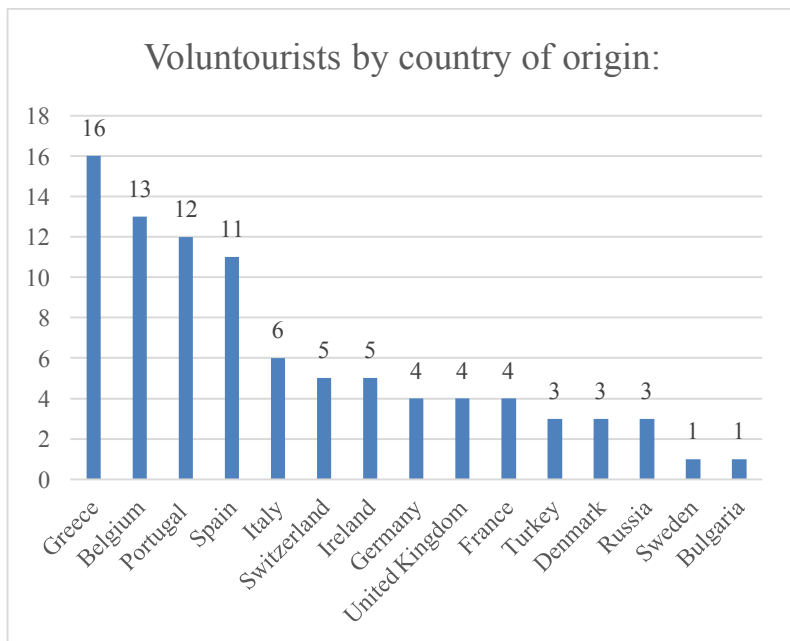
level". There were 46 females and 46 males who volunteered in the program.<sup>42</sup>



*Figure 3: Distribution of age groups of voluntourists participating*

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<sup>42</sup> In this thesis, I generally did not specify the name, country of origin or age group of participants as it is not necessarily relevant for the further discussion of the data results. Sometimes, I referred to participants when I describe observations, or anecdotes of informal conversations.



*Figure 4: Distribution of voluntourists by country of origin*

### **3.5 Research Methods**

With both tourists and Cubans as the focus of this inquiry, the methods of sociocultural anthropology were useful to explore the terrains on which these actors came together (Babb, 2011). This research involved a combination of informal conversations and interviews, direct participation and observation, analysis of literature, questionnaires, and reflexivity. The material of this study thus consists primarily out of self-collected data such as field notes and pictures. I also relied upon secondary material (produced by others), such as books. Throughout a qualitative approach has been adopted

to gain an in-depth insight into the experiences (Bernard, 2011; Sarantakos, 1993).<sup>43</sup>

### 3.5.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation has been used as a strong effort to observe the interactions between Cubans and tourists in *voluntouristic* situations, and it was chosen as the primary methodological tool in this study.<sup>44</sup> I observed and participated in the 46<sup>th</sup> edition of the *José Martí European Solidarity Brigade*. Moreover, I did further ethnographic fieldwork in Cuba before and after this program. My participation and observations during the brigade were by far the most important method I applied to collect data for this research project. This can be justified through statements of Davies (2008) who claimed that the hallmark of social and cultural anthropology is participant observation.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> I opted for informal interviews and conversations during the participant observation for various reasons: there was not enough time in the busy schedule of the volunteer program to conduct time-consuming scheduled interviews; the casual character of this method involved lower pressure for volunteers and Cubans to participate in the study; and it allowed me to have more open conversations on various moments of the day (such as during a bus trip or at the bar at night) which stimulated more openness towards communication.

<sup>44</sup> Davies (2008, 76) defined participant observation as following: “In its classic form participant observation consists of a single researcher spending an extended period of time (usually at least a year) living among the people he or she is studying, participating in their daily lives in order to gain as complete an understanding as possible of the cultural meanings and social structures of the group and how these are interrelated”.

<sup>45</sup> According to Davies (2008, 82): “The hallmark of participant observation is long-term personal involvement with those being studied, including participation in their lives to the extent that the researcher comes to understand the culture as an insider. ... not the major data-gathering

While I actively took part in the events of a volunteer brigade, I used the local language as well as the tourists' main languages (Spanish, English, Dutch and French) in the everyday activities, routine and interactions. Thereby, I used daily conversations as an informal interview technique, and observation while hanging out. Ultimately, DeWalt & DeWalt (2011, 10) argue that participant observation is important because "... it enhances the quality of the data obtained during fieldwork, it enhances the quality of the interpretation of data, it encourages the formulation of new research questions grounded in on-the-scene observation".

### **3.5.2 Interviewing**

In addition to participant observation, I also used the methods of informal conversations and interviews. I used the technique of probing in the meantime so that new and ideas that emerged could be explored, whilst examining relevant areas to each interviewee (Patton, 2015). This method also involved going out and staying out, speaking Spanish and English, and experiencing the lives of both actors (volunteers and Cubans) as much as possible. As Davies (2008, 87-88) noted: "speaking the native language is part of the anthropological mystique associated with ethnographic fieldwork... it helps to establish rapport and provides a reason to interact with people".

Informal conversations were not only suitable for studying sensitive topics such as jineterismo, but were also an excellent method for building rapport with the study subjects. Field notes were

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technique. Rather, participation in the everyday lives of people is a means of facilitating observation of particular behaviors and events and of enabling more open and meaningful discussions with informants. Without ethnographers' participation as some kind of member of the society, they might not be allowed to observe or would simply not know what to observe or how to go about it".



usually taken after these conversation, and consequently translated, coded and analyzed. Sometimes I also made scratch notes during conferences or activities with short anecdotes, which I later wrote down more elaborately in a diary. In the latter, I wrote down personal reactions, feelings, frustrations, and assessments of the volunteer work and life in Cuba.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.5.3 Post-Tour Questionnaires

As interviewing appeared to be not feasible, I decided to use a post-tour questionnaire with both closed and open questions for the volunteers to answer at their own pace when they arrived home (see Attachment 7.5).<sup>47</sup> Rochelle Spencer (2010, 21), an anthropologist who also conducted research in a touristic setting in Cuba, experienced similar difficulties with interviewing during her research, and advocated for the advantages of post-tour questionnaires:

“Although collecting data during the post-travel phase has been criticised I found it had a number of benefits for this research into tourism. First, a post-tour questionnaire aided in minimising the possibility of impacting on tour

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<sup>46</sup> Initially, I also planned to conduct (semi-)structured formal interviews during the volunteer brigade or immediately after the program ended while the tourists were still in Cuba, as this method is a very popular type of qualitative social research, especially in ethnographies (Davies, 2008). However, the research setting did not particularly allow me to undertake such interviews as I did not have the appropriate logistics and most tourists returned home straight after the brigade. Moreover, the itinerary of the program and the volunteer work it involved were so time-consuming that there was simply not enough time available to devote to interviewing and participating in the program at the same time.

<sup>47</sup> As most Cubans do not have regular access to the Internet, I decided not to create a questionnaire for them. This led, however, to a disproportion in ethnographic data to analyze between voluntourists and jineteros.

participants' experiences. Second, the criticisms made regarding post-travel data collection were carefully considered and then addressed through a combination of participatory observation, interviews and informal conversations during the on-site travel phase, implementation of email questionnaires during the post-travel phase and the collection of supporting evidence during the on-site and post-travel phases. It was hoped that this combination of methods (triangulation) would enhance the reliability and validity of the research.”

I created online self-administrated questionnaires which I distributed via e-mail and Facebook as a method of semi-structured interviewing – as discussed by Bernard (2011) – to expose the participants to questions about their experiences on volunteer work, solidarity, reciprocity and intimacy in Cuba. At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents had the choice to opt-in or -out for a follow-up interview and to add additional comments on the discussed topics of the questionnaire.<sup>48</sup>

I sent the questionnaires to 92 European participants. I created an English and a Spanish version as not all brigadistas were English speakers.<sup>49</sup> All respondents got the same questions, with a preselected set of possible responses or open questions. There was a total of 34 questions, divided in 6 main categories that expressed the different topics related to this thesis: tourism, solidarity, gifts, friendship, intimacy and general information.

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<sup>48</sup> I found it advantageous to determine the survey questions and how to ask them after having participated in the program and having observed tourists and Cubans before sending the questionnaires out, because I already had a better idea of what type of topics I wanted to question.

<sup>49</sup> The respondents had the choice to write the open responses in English, Spanish, French or Dutch. I translated all answers to English in Chapter 4.

The questionnaire received 57 respondents in total: 48 English responses and 9 Spanish responses, resulting in a non-response rate of 35 persons.<sup>50</sup> The average age of the respondents was 31 years old with 60% females and 40% males. Approximately 50% of the participants was employed, 40% was a student, and 10% was retired. Most respondents obtained a graduate or undergraduate degree. Little people only held a high school degree or had no degree at all.

Because it was relevant for this study on intimate relationships, I also asked about the respondents' relationship status: 55% were single, 24% were in a relationship or civil union, and 21% were married. Half of the brigadistas travelled to Cuba in a group which they joined from their country, 30% of them came alone to the island, and 20% travelled with family or friends. Although it was the first time travelling to Cuba for most the participants, some had been in Cuba several times before.

The main purpose of this social survey was to search for relationships between variables (categories). However, I analyzed the collected data qualitatively in an interpretative and narrative text study in which I aimed to show how voluntourism and jineterismo are related to one another. I also looked at how certain characteristics of voluntourists and Cubans account for the existence of certain themes and the absence of others. The aim was to search for patterns in the data that helped explaining why those patterns are there in the first place (Bernard, 2011; Davies, 2008). I will discuss these results of the questionnaire in Chapter 4 where I present the data analysis and research findings.

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<sup>50</sup> The results of this research project are based on these 57 respondents. Therefore, I would like to note that this thesis does not want to generalize. Rather, it provides an understanding of the lifeworld of these people.

### 3.5.4 The Phenomenological Self

Ultimately, this type of study has been phenomenological, meaning that I tried to see reality through another person's eyes while producing convincing descriptions of what was experienced (Bernard, 2011; Davies, 2008). Schutz (1967) defined social phenomenology as the study of everyday experiences emphasizing a contextual understanding and intersubjective meanings of events.

Being in the field often requires personal engagement and full involvement of the ethnographer in order to develop a deeper understanding of the social phenomena studied. I therefore drew on the blending with the study subjects, and on personal experiences of situations where the interplay of voluntourism and jineterismo was at play. This provided a way to evoke the richness and detail of the delicate interrelationship between tourism, politics, solidarity, romance, friendship and reciprocity. As a result, this study has also been partially auto-ethnographical.<sup>51</sup>

My position as a 24-years old European female participant observer implied, nevertheless, as well that I became the recipient of flirtation (typical in the machismo culture of Cuba) and unsolicited advances from Cuban men and tourists. It was therefore important to use such phenomenological experiences in a reflexive way while committing to theoretical analysis. As Anderson (2006) noted, such an engaged dialogue requires the researcher to engage visibly, actively and reflexively in the text.

Likewise, I aim to include a self-conscious and critical analytic introspection and reflexivity of my own experiences in the field as a participant observer in the data results and discussion – which I

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<sup>51</sup> Auto-ethnography is defined by Anderson (2006, 375) as “research in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in published texts, and (3) committed to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena”.

present in Chapter 4 – without losing my commitment to develop an understanding of the presented topic and social reality which goes beyond the researcher’s Self (Davies, 2008).

### **3.6 Ethical & Reflexive Considerations**

During this research project in Cuba, I encountered several ethical issues. Before going over to the actual discussion of the data analysis in Chapter 4, I believe it is important to pay attention to these ethical considerations. Likewise, I address my position as a researcher in the field in a reflexive way to frame the angle of my approach and how I was approached in Cuba.

#### **3.6.1 Informed Consent & Anonymity**

Ethical guidelines explain that it is important to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity to all participants in the research project. Likewise, informed consent must be given (Bernard, 2011). In practice, this did not work out at all for a few reasons that were specific to this research setting and themes: how could I possibly convince Cubans to sign a paper or tape-record their voice if they can be put in jail for talking openly about their personal assessment of tourism in Cuba and their intimate involvements with tourists or their opinion about the country’s socialist system? Moreover, the informal character of the method of participant observation and friendship which I used did not lend itself to a written formalization and blurred my identity as a researcher.

In her work, Bell (2014, 512) uses a comment by Linda Giles about the *futility of consent forms*: it “does not need to (be obtained) via a written form. I find such a form very off-putting and worrying for many local peoples outside of the European cultural milieu – they worry about signing and moreover they worry about remaining anonymous. ... written consent forms are often not the best way to

obtain consent in many fieldwork contexts”. I argue similarly that talking to somebody is giving consent anyway: if people are not willing to share stories, they simply not talk about it, so the fact that they talk is oral consent itself.

For the reasons mentioned above, I found that anonymity and confidentiality were more important than a written informed consent. Accordingly, I have changed all the names of the informants in this document to pseudonyms, except for those who explicitly mentioned that it was not necessary. This does, however, not mean that participants did not agree to participate in the study. As voluntary participation is an absolute requirement, informed consent must indeed be obtained. For unrecorded interviews and conversations oral acceptance and promise were therefore sufficient.

### **3.6.2 Truth & Transparency**

Following the guidelines of Davies (2008), I should have explained the research objectives as fully as possible to the research participants. However, I could not tell them the complete nature of this research because it would impact their behaviour and relationship towards me. I therefore used partial truths to gain access: I did tell them that I wanted to study voluntourism, solidarity, friendships and intimacy, but I did not mention the word *jineterismo* because it had such a negative connotation. In some cases, I also pretended to be a tourist myself without informing the interlocutors about the research project, but this happened mostly outside the camp setting during my travels.

Moreover, the Cuban political system does not allow ethnographers to conduct research without governmental permission and special visas that require a long procedure before acceptance. The researcher then needs to present his data to have governmental permission. As I did not have sufficient time to go through this process, and as I was sure that part of this research would not be well

received by the state, I conducted research under a tourist visa. For state agents, this ethnographic fieldwork was thus covert. Davies (2008, 63) talked about this in her book as well: “covert research can only be undertaken using observation or participant observation; it is not possible, for example, to conduct an interview covertly”.

She continued: “Beside the risks to research subjects, those adopting covert research also expose themselves to a variety of risks, either from retaliation upon being exposed as a researcher or from being pressured into risky behaviour, such as illegal activities, in order to protect their disguise” (Davies, 2008, 63). My secret identity towards state agents not only opposed me to such risks, but also worked counterproductive in accessing certain information. Such political manipulations resulted in a limited access to specific informants (state agents) and certain documents or statistics provided by the state, and led to another ethical issue.

Although Davies (2008, 62) argued that “the potential for a researcher successfully penetrating powerful organizations is quite limited”, I did gain a limited level of cooperation of the ICAP institute after having participated in the volunteer brigade. I believe that my dedication and determination to volunteer in Cuba helped to gain their respect and trust, so I noticed that the ICAP staff members became more willing to share information towards the end of the program. As I kept in contact via email and visited their offices in Havana several times after the brigade, they rewarded my perseverance with a somewhat more open communication. Because of my deliberately concealed identity towards informants, I did manage to gather some data.

On the other hand, I experienced that the Cuban informants also used partial truths: some gave socially or politically desirable responses when I asked them about more intimate themes such as their relationships with tourists and denied any familiarization with *jineterismo*. This might be because it is an intimate domain of their

private life which they did not wish to share with an ethnographer, but it can also be politically motivated as they feared the state's control on freedom of speech. In short, truth and transparency as suggested by ethical guidelines about the intent and the nature of a research project were not as simple to be given and received.

### **3.6.3 Positionality & Power(lessness)**

Ultimately, my position as female, young, white, Belgian, highly educated, single researcher resulted in certain issues I wish to reflect upon. Ethnographers indeed bring multiple identities to their research field and this influences the establishment of rapport with their research informants. It was therefore important to critically engage with and monitor how these identities were perceived and interpreted by research subjects, and how they impacted the data collection in both advantageous and disadvantageous ways.

Regarding my positionality towards volunteers, I did not experience such difficulties. As I am a young European citizen myself and having professional experience with international volunteers, I established rapport with this study subject group easily. Moreover, I experienced my ability to speak the native language – Spanish – as well as the international languages – English and French – and the language of the Belgian volunteer group – Dutch – as highly advantageous in conducting research because languages give an important insight into one's *native mentality*.

As Margaret Mead already noticed, gender is an important variable in data collection, which limits access to certain information and influences the perception of others (Mead, 1986). Being a female researcher, I was often approached by males who were interested in having sex with me. This confronted me sometimes with limitations to the study as those males gave socially desirable responses: they told me what I wanted to hear and so they became unsuitable as



informants. At times, I felt quite powerless being in such position as a female researcher.

On the other hand, I felt unwantedly very powerful sometimes as well because at a financial level I had much more money than my Cuban informants. Often, I was the one paying drinks and dinners for them because they simply could not afford it, or to show gratitude towards them and their willingness to participate in this study. Although I sincerely meant this positively, I am aware that it also created certain power dynamics that influenced my rapport with them. I also experienced that some informants appreciated my presence because of these threats.

For the reasons stated above, I argue that it is important to use my personal experiences and positionality in a well-measured reflexive way (Bernard, 2011; Markowitz & Ashkenazi, 1999). As Salzman (2002, 806) described: “reflexivity is thus the constant awareness, assessment, and reassessment by the researcher of the researcher’s own contribution/influence/shaping of intersubjective research and the consequent research findings”. I decided that the only way to write a good ethnography was to examine my own relationship with informants reflexively. Or in the words of Davies (2008, 95): “ethnographers must be prepared to examine as honestly and carefully as possibly their personal reasons for undertaking the research and their feelings about it”.

## 4. CHAPTER 4: DATA RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the data results and analysis while building further on existing literature. I start off with an ethnographic description of my personal entry as an anthropologist in the field. Then, an ethnographic description of the life in an international camp in Cuba is given. Next, the data is presented in three different categories: the political, the economic, and the social, before coming a conclusion about the interconnectedness between these three interacting elements in voluntourism and jineterismo in Cuba.

### 4.1 Entering the Field: Encountering Angél

#### 4.1.1 From Friendship...

It is no hidden secret within the discipline of anthropology that making a friend is one of the best ways to establish rapport and getting to know a community during the early stage of ethnographic fieldwork. The development of friendships between anthropologists and their informants is indeed a common experience to enhance social relationships and deepen the ethnographical analysis (Davies, 2008; Robben & Sluka, 2014). Already in the 1960s, Hortense Powdermaker (1966, 420) wrote about anthropologists and friendships in the field in her famous book *Stranger and Friends*. She argued that “whatever the degree of the field worker’s participation in the whole society, friendships with a few people develop, and they help him to find a niche in the community. It is these friends who often become his best informants”. Likewise, I ended up establishing rapport with my friend and key informant, Angél.

On the first morning in the *campamento*, all brigadistas went to offer flowers at the bust statue José Martí during the official opening ceremony of the volunteer brigade. While I was listening to the

speech, I was interrupted by somebody who approached me. Having spent some time in Cuba already, I smiled his compliments away. I was used to the flirtation. However, I sensed that this person could be interesting (both friendship wise as for this research), and so we started to talk. His name was Angél. He was a Cuban man of 34 years old from Havana, and he turned out to be Belgium's group leader and translator.<sup>52</sup> He worked with us (brigadistas) on the field, listened to conferences, visited the monuments, guided us through cities, and taught us how to dance salsa. On stage was where Angél shined brightest and felt best.

Angél soon became my best friend in the camp and key informant about the brigade. Moreover, the friendship that grew between us, opened doors for new friendships with other staff members in the field. The higher level of contact I had in the camp with the staff member – such as Maria, Leo and José – was partially because I was one of the fewer people that spoke Spanish, but mostly because of my relationship / rapport with Angél who introduced me to all his colleagues and friends. It reminded me of Powdermaker's (1966, 287) statement that “The conditions for successful mutual communication include (1) physical proximity of the field worker to the people he studies, (2) knowledge of their language, and (3) psychological involvement”.

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<sup>52</sup> Later, I found out that Angél worked for more than ten years in the Cuban tourism sector as the head of animation in several hotels. He married a European girl that visited him several times in the hotel where he worked, and left Cuba to Europe like many Cubans with the dream of a better life. For 8 years, he lived and worked in Europe as an interpreter, but the stressful life and materialistic lifestyle of Europeans did not make him happier. He divorced and returned to Cuba with just enough money for his one-way ticket back home: “*pobre pero sincero*” (poor but honest), as he recounted it with pride.

#### 4.1.2 ... To Romance & Sex

My relationship with Angél soon took on more romantic tones after a late night with reggaeton dancing and rum drinking at the *Piragua* bar of the *campamento*. As I had no intention to develop any kind of such relationship in the field, I was confronted with an ethical dilemma. On the one hand, between Angél and I developed a close friendship, respect and mutual liking, which I could not hide. On the other hand, I was trained to respect the ethical distance towards informants as it could cross the blurry the lines between professionalism and amateurism regarding my position as an ethnographer studying intimate relations in Cuba.<sup>53</sup>

For a long time, I hesitated whether to write about my rapport with Angél in this thesis, but after having read many similar cases in fieldwork, I decided to confess. Moreover, it felt impossible to write this thesis pretending that this did not happen. I could not imagine having written this thesis without these experiences with him, and his input and influences in this research project. Apart from having helped me to understand his culture, the work of ICAP and Cuban society, he also helped me to understand the fragility of jineterismo. In the words of Powdermaker (1966, 260): “he truly became *engaged*, identified with the project and with me”.

One of the most provoking pieces on anthropologists and friendships or romances in the field, was the chapter *On the Ethics of*

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<sup>53</sup> In first instance, Angél and I decided to keep the nature of our relationship secret for both the volunteers as the staff members in the camp for several reasons: most importantly, he was officially and explicitly not allowed to have consensual sex with tourists, so he was scared to get fired. Secondly, I did not want other volunteers (who knew about the nature of this research) to think that I was using him as a study subject. Although many fellow volunteers and Cubans assumed that there was something more, we never publicly addressed our relationship before the end of the program.

*Romantic Relationships* by the American anthropologist Kaifa Roland (2011, 18) in which she talks about her marriage with Yeshua, one of her key Cuban interlocutors, and in which she openly expresses her frustrations with ethics in the field:

“Female fieldworkers are trained to go into the field with backstories (true or fictional) of boyfriends or husbands back home, so that the men with whom they interact know they are “attached” to a male. ... I sometimes engaged in this fiction. In Cuba, I was told on more than one occasion that “*no importa*” (it doesn’t matter) ... But Yeshua was different. ... I never felt pursued by him, so an ease friendship developed between us as he helped me with my fieldnotes. The music and heat of dancing changed the nature of the relationship.”

Intimacy and sex in the field remain sensitive ethical issues. When it becomes part of the participant observation, it also involves methodological issues. “However, intimacy helps break down the distinction between “self” and “other” and the cultural boundaries that obscure the common humanity of researchers and their informants, and consensual sex between adults can be seen not as a power relationship but, rather, as its opposite – the breaking down of hierarchy and establishment of equality between them”, Robben & Sluka (2014, 138) argued.

I decided that transparency, honesty and reflexivity could lead to a critical examination within this ethnography, if it was explained to the reader as carefully as possible. Therefore, I would like to make clear that this thesis is not about my relationship with Angél, but that it did form the backdrop of this research, and that I precisely made the decision to confess because of an ethical reason. Fernández (2010, 11) once wrote about her relationship: “Antonio is present on every page, but the story of our relationship remains between us”, and so is Angél.

## 4.2 In the Field: Life at the *Campamento*

For over three weeks, I stayed with the participants of the *José Martí Solidarity Volunteer Brigade* in the *Campamento Internacional Julio Antonio Mella* (CIJAM). I already introduced the camp historically within the framework of the ICAP organization in Chapter 2.1, but now I would like to pay attention to the experience of life as a European voluntourist in this Cuban setting and what a regular day at the camp looks like.

I literally arrived *in the field* on Sunday 3 July 2016. Together with the Belgian participants – whom I met earlier that week in Havana –, we traveled from the ICAP office in Havana to the camping site in Caimito. When we arrived, we were asked to drop off our bags in the appointed dormitories. The sleeping areas had very basic standard facilities such as one electricity plug (for 8 people), and 2 ventilators. Although it was often almost 40 degrees, there was no air-conditioning: the idea of the camp was to live as an average Cuban, which entailed a basic life with little comfort.

After having settled, we were invited for a first dinner in the on-site dining area where a kitchen provided food three times a day for more than hundred foreigners and Cubans. The typically Cuban food was simple but sufficient. The rest of the night, most volunteers spent near the Piragua bar where *Cuba Libre* and *Mojito* cocktails were sold for as little as 1,50 CUC in plastic cups.<sup>54</sup> Cheap enough to get drunk fast and (too) often! Although the facilities were far from luxurious to satisfy average touristic needs, the camping site did have some entertaining facilities such as a library and a bar. It is generally known that Cuba pays a lot of attention to social and cultural development of its people: music, dance, art and sports are important elements of the society. That is why Monaco (2016, 14) called this “the Club-Med version for communists”.

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<sup>54</sup> 1,50 CUC was equivalent to 1,35 EUR at the time of conducting research.

Each morning, an alarm went off at 5.45 AM. There was no need to have a personal alarm, everything seemed a collective ritual: even waking up by a recorded rooster introducing Che Guevara's famous farewell letter to Fidel Castro echoing loudly from the stereo-installations everywhere in the camp while everyone stumbled out of his bed (a mattress on a piece of wood). This was community life in a communistic setting! At 7.00 AM it was time for a daily meeting and division of tasks. Each day the volunteers were explained by the staff members that what kind of work they were going to do, and why it mattered: "Our work is not symbolic. It does matter for the agricultural communities nearby", they said more than once.

After all the volunteers had been divided in five groups for the various tasks within a rotation system, the groups left to their work place for the day. Each group was accompanied by a Cuban group leader / translator. To reach the fields nearby, the groups were transported in the load area of a *camioneta*, a kind of a truck (see photos in attachment 7.9). Although "being carried as animals in the back" (as a volunteer once called it) was far from safe according to Western standards, it was a popular Cuban means of transportation which most volunteers enjoyed because it was fun having a panoramic perspective on top while on the road, and because it was one of the rare times that we could experience a fresh breeze. Usually, the tasks consisted out of collecting fruit (such as limes, guavas and mangos) or clearing the land of weeds that endanger the crops.

After hardly two or three hours of working in the fields, most volunteers gave up: "*Respect to all Cubans that can handle such hard work for so little money!*", were typical comments shared by the volunteers on the way back to the camp. "*I had to look for some shadow around 10h30 because I couldn't stand the burning sun on my back anymore. Now I understand why we must wake up so early. You simply can't work during the day!*", commented another volunteer. Usually, the farmer that assisted and led the work closed

the morning with a small talk on his life and his agricultural work while the volunteers sheltered from the heat. Sometimes, the volunteers were offered a symbolic gift as a sign of appreciation: some limes to use in the cocktails at night, some mangos for our breakfast buffet, or a carrot for each one of us.

Once back in the camp, everybody ran to the potable water tanks to rehydrate and then showered to rinse off the red colored sand of our bodies and clothes before having lunch in one of the sanitary areas located close to the dormitories with separate sections for males and females. There was very little (and only cold) water. Sometimes there was no water at all. Despite the frustrations I experienced with these basic facilities of the camp, it also had something special and unique: located in the middle of the nature, surrounded by peaceful fields. The *campamento* was fun as well for some reasons: there were many areas to hang out, such as a football field, a library, a bar, a shop, and an internet room.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, there was almost always playing music from the stereo-installations: salsa, reggaeton or communist songs.

The afternoons were usually filled with conferences, documentaries or discussions on Cuban topics in the camp's conference hall, or sometimes outside the camp on location. Hereby, the ICAP staff members' task was to inform the volunteers about Cuban history, politics and customs, and to explain them the activities that were carried out. In my opinion, their task seemed more to be making propaganda for socialism and brainwashing neoliberalist minds at times than critical examination of global politics.<sup>56</sup> During these afternoon sessions, it became most clear to

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<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that the internet room was usually closed or malfunctioning due to a bad or too slow cable connection. Moreover, computers were old and malfunctioning.

<sup>56</sup> I argue this because I observed – and was later told by one of my Cuban informants – that all such conferences and discussions were strictly



me that most participants were not average voluntourists, but politically motivated travelers who had a strong interest in the Cuban socialist system. These findings are part of the analysis which I explain in depth in the next section.

The evenings were usually less politically loaded with lots of live band performances of music artists and dancers, followed by open-air parties that made each evening last too long for waking up so early the next morning. With bottles of rum costing only 4 CUC and cans of *TuKola* (the Cuban alternative to Coca Cola), alcohol became a ritual ingredient that was consumed daily.<sup>57</sup> With many participants getting drunk and mingling in various ways (dancing, chatting, kissing, ...), friendships and romances were developed especially at night. This part was not less interesting from the anthropological perspective to analyze, as both tourists interacted with each other but also with Cubans in different ways for different reasons. My critical anthropological analysis of these engagements is the subject of one of the following sections too.

### **4.3 Volunteer Tourism & Political Solidarity**

#### **4.3.1 Experiencing ‘The Real Cuba’**

One of the first questions I asked volunteers was what their motivation was to join this brigade. I let the participants of this study categorize fixed answer options in order of importance (see Figure 5 below). I selected these 10 answer options based on the results of the literature review to test the hypothesis that authenticity, political motivations and making friendships were important factors in choosing for a brigade. This hypothesis was confirmed by the data

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controlled and manipulated by a delegate of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) who recorded everything on a tablet.

<sup>57</sup> 4 CUC was equivalent to 3,6 EUR at the time of conducting research.

results: 86% of the respondents categorized ‘see the real / different Cuba’ as ‘important’ or ‘very important’.<sup>58</sup> However, Doerr & Taïeb (2017, 117) argued in their study: “The terms ‘authentic’ and ‘real’ are perhaps the most widely abused terms in study abroad and volunteer tourism”.

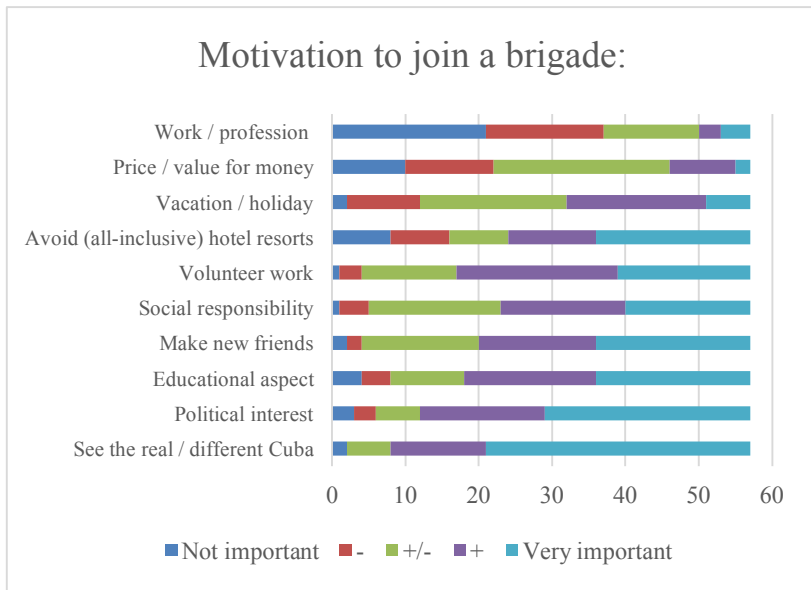


Figure 5: Analysis of volunteers’ motivations to join a brigade

One volunteer who had been in Cuba for the fourth time already, but who participated for the first time in the brigade, commented: “It was very important to me to participate in this brigade once in my life to know and to see all that we can’t know and see when we are a tourist, and so to feel useful in the construction of socialism”. This argument suggests that participation in the brigade provided the voluntourist a more authentic glimpse in the real Cuban society

<sup>58</sup> 86% represents 49 (13 + 46) respondents out of 57 respondents.

beyond the touristic realm. Moreover, he obviously had a political motive (another important motivator) for this participation as he actively supports the socialist political system.

Here, the idea of going *backstage* in a society – as the sociologist MacCannell (1973) calls it in his sociological theory on staged authenticity – is proof of a certain search for authenticity which dominates voluntouristic experiences and explains this desire to experience authenticity because of consumption and a capitalistic alienation, as Jakubiak (2017, 197) noted:

“MacCannell explains, following Marxist theories of political economy, that in a fast-paced world of industrial consumption, “Modern Man is losing his attachments to the work bench, the neighborhood, the town, the family ... at the same time, he is developing an interest in the ‘real life’ of others” (91). Thus, it is theorized why, over the last few decades, many view travel in the Global South as a way to get in touch with “the real.” It is offered that people living in basic conditions are authentic in a way that middle-class people living in the Global North are not. Global South people, travel industry literature suggest, interact more with their environments, find personal engagement in their work, and are not alienated from the labor process. To visit and interact with these “authentic” people and their communities is argued to serve as a balm to the alienation that many people in the West experience in their day-to-day lives (Clifford 1997).”

I argue that such idea of *the real* is highly stereotypical and caused by romanticized ideas and constructs about the respective societies. Such views are also embedded in the commercial language that the promoters of voluntouristic programs use. *Experience the real Cuba!*” or “*Discover the real Cuba now it’s still possible* or *Be*

*more than just a tourist!* are widespread one-liners within the context of Cuba's voluntourism marketing. In this regard, the state also operates as a *jinetero*: the Cuban government exploits its unique political system to attract more tourists, but paradoxically loses its uniqueness as opening up to international tourism is a move towards more capitalism and income to the island simultaneously.

Another important (f)actor in this staged authenticity is the governmental organization ICAP. By presenting the brigades as opportunities to get to know the *real Cuba* and its political system, it strengthens these preconceived ideas rather than to break them down. Although most participants seemed to have the opinion that they have had a more authentic experience of Cuban life (compared to a *regular* tourist in Cuba), as an anthropologist I would argue that the highly-staged and planned program of the volunteer brigade rather proves that ICAP presents a *fake reality*. This is what Hollander (1981, 424 as cited in Monaco, 2016, 4) calls *techniques of hospitality*: "These consist, on the one side, to make the guest feel physically comfortable and psychologically important and appreciated; on the other, to display a selected and highly planned 'reality' to reduce the possible spontaneous encounters with local people who could convey a different 'flavour of life in the country'". De Ryck (2015, my translation), a non-Spanish speaking participant, described that:

"'Cubans are not allowed to talk to tourists.' 'You should watch out, they keep an eye on you.' Such nonsense I've heard more than once at home. For all those who believe this, I would like to make it clear now, for once and for all, now with a certain authority as a Cuba traveler, that this is the biggest bullshit you can tell about Cuba. The only obstacle you experience, is the censorship that you impose on yourself, by not speaking the language or taking anti-Cuba talks for real. ... Who claims otherwise, is talking bullshit. You can talk to

everyone in Cuba. During three weeks, I've had dozens of Cubans around me. On the camp. In the hotel. At the field. In the streets. On the beach. I've been free to speak with everyone. But my lack of Spanish didn't allow me to. Luckily, most tour leaders spoke some English. In the conversations I had with them, I could learn a lot about Cuban life. And they told me everything. Also about the difficulties they have.”

The fact that this participant does not speak Spanish and encountered himself in the itinerary by ICAP, but still claims that he has the *authority* to speak about the *real* Cuba, proofs that Hollander's theory on *techniques of hospitality* is at work in this touristic setting.

#### 4.3.2 Volunteer or *Brigadista*?

*El trabajo voluntario es una escuela creadora de conciencias -*  
Che Guevara<sup>59</sup>

In his speech on October 8, 1987 Fidel Castro said that “voluntary work was the brainchild of Che and one of the best things he left us during his stay in our country and his part in the revolution, was steadily on the decline. It became a formality almost” (Guevara & Castro, 2016, 41). Volunteer work in Cuba is, in fact, not just a popular touristic phenomenon which is on the rise. Rather, it is part of a larger revolutionary ideology. This explains also why international volunteer brigades already exist since the 1970s whereas voluntourism has only begun to develop in the 1990s. The difference is that volunteer brigades originated as a political project whereas voluntourism is a niche tourism market that has its focus on

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<sup>59</sup> As cited by Puicercús Vázquez, 2014, 109. My translation: “volunteer work is a school that creates consciousness”.

tourism with the purpose of volunteering.<sup>60</sup> Che Guevara was one of the example figures to follow by the Cuban population since the Cuban Revolution: one who volunteers and displays solidarity.

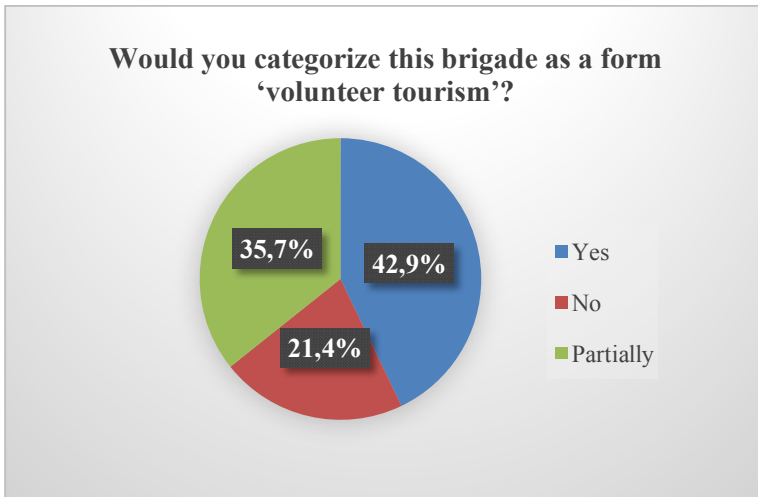
In my description of the ICAP, I stated that the government does not consider volunteer work brigades as a form of tourism, but rather a direct form of getting to know the Cuban reality (Puicercús Vázquez, 2014, 33). Nevertheless, as these programs include both volunteer work as touristic activities, I argued that it can be categorized as voluntourism. To test the hypothesis, I asked research participants whether they would categorize the volunteer brigade as a form of volunteer tourism (see Figure 6 below). Most respondents (43%) said ‘yes’ whereas only 21% said ‘no’. Many respondents (36%) agreed partially. Amongst their arguments were:

*“I think that it’s wrong to categorize this trip as ‘tourism’. It’s not only tourism, but also a way to help Cuba and to learn something about it.”*

*“I agree with the aspect of ‘tourism’ but I still have my objections as far as ‘voluntarism’ is concerned, since our stay in Cuba didn’t involve much voluntary work (only 7 days for 3 hours daily) compared to other voluntary work programs I have been to. We were treated more like tourists, but ‘responsible’ ones, and I’m afraid we (or better I) didn’t contribute as much as we should to reinforce socialism.”*

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<sup>60</sup> However, volunteer brigades are increasingly becoming touristic with optional excursions and souvenirs being sold during the brigade by ICAP and Amistur.



*Figure 6: Analysis of volunteers' categorization of the brigade as volunteer tourism*

There were indeed many other activities planned in the program that did not consist of voluntary work. The travel agency AMISTUR CUBA S.A. offered various optional touristic excursions during the brigade that were not included in the program.<sup>61</sup> ICAP also organized many conferences on sociopolitical topics organized by Cuban governmental institutions in the afternoon.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, the

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<sup>61</sup> Offered excursions were: Cabaret Tropicana, Varadero Excursion (day use hotel Playa de Oro), Playa Girón, Cabaret Parisiana, Vinales, Varadero Plaza América, sustainable development community Las Terrazas, Visit National Aquarium Cuba, Playa del Este, and Habana Café Buena Vista Social Club. Prices ranged between 25 and 65 CUC.

<sup>62</sup> Conference topics were: 'the anti-imperialistic philosophy of José Martí', 'process of normalization of the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba. Prospects and challenges', "Cuban economy. The Cuban economic model and foreign investments, as a strategy to strengthen socialism" and "Human rights in Cuba: subversion vs. sovereignty".

program included visits to museums and community projects, *organopónicos* (cooperative agricultural projects), a psychiatric clinic, a sociocultural project; the display of documentaries about Cuban politics; discussions with political organizations; and ceremonies to acknowledge important political figures in Cuban history. It is also put forward and appreciated that way by organizations and participants (see attachment 7.1, flyer ICS).<sup>63</sup> One participant commented very thoughtfully:

*“I wouldn’t categorize the brigade as volunteer tourism because of various reasons. During volunteer programs, you usually stay in one and the same organization which organizes many things (care, community work, ...) to which the government doesn’t want to invest money (difference with Cuba). Often this is with a catholic or charitable perspective. ... And during this trip we have got to know the political process of Cuba. Something that you don’t see during volunteer trips, in which you usually stay within the organization and don’t get to know the country very well. Having said this, I would categorize the brigade more as an ‘inleefreis’ in which you get to know the different aspects of a country such as culture, politics, care...”<sup>64</sup>*

Nevertheless, the government calls the participants *brigadistas*, a term soon adopted by the participants to refer to each other. At the very beginning of the brigade, upon arrival in the CIJAM lodging facility, each participant received his personal identity card (see mine in attachment 7.8), accrediting the volunteer officially as a

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<sup>63</sup> The flyer of ICS mentioned voluntary work, Che Guevara, salsa, Havana, debates, beach, sports, nature and politics as the key words in its promotion for the volunteer brigade in July 2016.

<sup>64</sup> There is no translation for the Dutch word ‘inleefreis’. It is a kind of familiarization trip in which the tourist indulges himself in a local culture.



*brigadista*. As Puigercús Vázquez (2014, 34, my translation) already noted: “(this is) something very respected by the Cuban people” because the aim of a brigade is to support and defend the Cuban Revolution. Sometimes we were even greeted as *pioneros por el comunismo* (pioneers for communism). However, I absolutely did not identify as a supporter of communism myself and I did never expect this volunteer trip to be that political. However, most participants were very interested in the conferences and engaged actively with the contents by asking many questions and discussing political topics during the trip. One participant commented:<sup>65</sup>

*“Everywhere we went in Cuba, when we told Cuban people that we were part of the Volunteer Brigade, they were very grateful, they smiled and they spontaneously thanked us very warmly.”*

Eventually, towards the end of the program, the Cuban state officials who worked for/in the campamento, started to accredit the participants even more: “*Compañera (my friend), for us, you are now not a foreigner anymore, but we consider you as part of our people and as part of our Revolution*”, somebody told me. Whether I agreed with it or not, the brigade was closed officially during a ceremony at the camp’s conference hall with a speech, written by the brigadistas, stating that we supported and promised to defend Cuban socialism (see attachment 7.6). As nobody ever asked my permission to state this in my name as well, I was not the only one feeling uncomfortable: “*You see... They really try to brainwash foreigners here...*”, a Cuban – who noted my disapproving look – commented quietly.

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<sup>65</sup> In this thesis, I mostly talk about voluntourists, but I also talk about brigadistas. I mix the names without further personal connotation.

### 4.3.3 On Socialism, Solidarity & Justice

As an anthropologist conducting ethnographic fieldwork on volunteer brigades in Cuba, it started to become clear to me from the very first day that this trip to Cuba was going to be political in various ways. Often, the participants were invited to salute and offer flowers to José Martí and Che Guevara memorials as they are considered the symbols of Cuban socialism, solidarity and justice. Gradually, I noticed that it were not just the volunteers who thus participated with political motives, but that the government organized these brigades to promote socialism through solidarity with peoples from all over the world.

It is commonly known that Cubans consider their revolution as a part of the battle against imperialism, capitalism and neoliberal globalization (Liekens, 2005). This political project got an international character when the Cuban government decided to collaborate with foreign *friendship* and *solidarity* organizations supporting this ideology. According to Puicercús Vázquez (2014, 33), “there are existing approximately thousand organizations of this type in more than hundred countries”. Interestingly, the questionnaire showed that half of the brigade participants was an active member of such organization supporting solidarity with Cuba at home (see attachment 7.7). Evidently, participation in an international volunteer brigade means to collaborate with the revolutionary process of Cuba for many volunteers.

After having reviewed existing literature, I wanted to know if solidarity through voluntourism is then a sentimental or political response to development and which power dynamics were at play in such asymmetrical touristic experiences. Therefore, I asked the participants whether they supported Cuba’s political ideology and political system (see Figure 7 below). Of the 57 respondents of the questionnaire, 73% supported the revolutionary ideals and 25%

partially did. Only as little as 2% of the respondents did not support these views. When I asked them why, they explained:

*“It is a system that puts people in the first place. ... In my point of view socialism is the only way to make a new society where wealth is distributed equitably to guarantee the same opportunities”*

*“...because history showed us that capitalism has no future. Socialism which is scientifically based in dialectical materialism is the only solution for the whole of humanity.”*

*“...because I am a communist and the Cuban Revolution is a thrilling example that socialism is possible and necessary.”*

Other respondents agreed only partially:

*“The reason why I am only partially supporting Cuba’s ideology / socialist political system is that I find that Cuba is missing something when it comes to democracy and freedom of speech. I don’t like that it gives 25 years of jail to be a system critic in Cuba, as well as I don’t like that it is forbidden for Cubans to tell foreigners that it is forbidden to criticize the system.”*

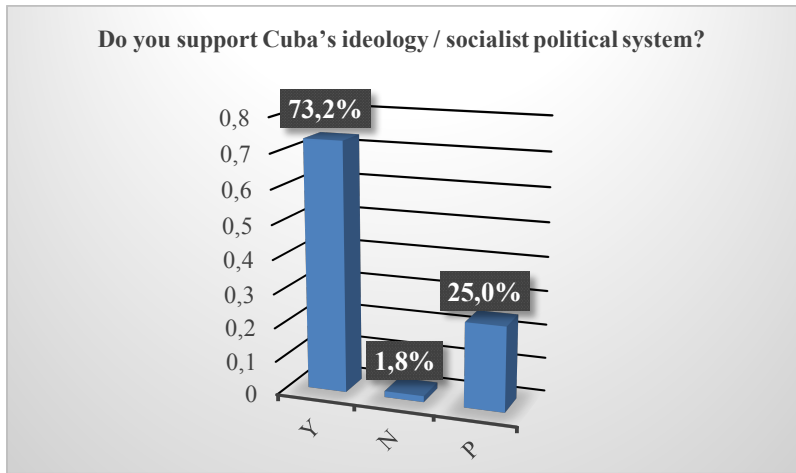


Figure 7: Analysis of volunteers' support for Cuba's political ideology

Another important factor which is integral to Cuba's socialist character is solidarity. As Fidel Castro once said: "Solidarity in the heart of a people is impossible without solidarity among all peoples" (as cited in Veltmeyer & Rushton, 2012, 237). International solidarity – practiced through volunteer brigades – is an important revolutionary principle which forms part of the Cuban constitution under Article 12.<sup>66</sup> In their work on *The Cuban Revolution as Socialist Human Development*, Veltmeyer and Rushton (2012, 239)

<sup>66</sup> Article 12 of the Cuban Constitution (Republic of Cuba, 1976) states that "the Republic of Cuba espouses the principles of anti-imperialism and internationalism" by basing "its relations with the countries building socialism on fraternal friendship, cooperation, and mutual aid, founded upon the common objectives of the construction of the new society" and maintaining "relations of friendship with the countries which, possessing a different political, social and economic regime, respect its sovereignty, observe the rules of coexistence among the States, adhere to the principles of mutual advantage, and adopt a reciprocal attitude with our country".

described that – according to the Cuban constitution – solidarity is “...the issue of support for the struggles of peoples all over the world against oppression and exploitation”. The goal of demonstrating solidarity thus involves the maintenance of transnational *friendships* with socialist-minded sympathizers worldwide.

Likewise, Veltmeyer & Rushton (2012, 240) wrote that “Behind this principle of solidarity codified in the Constitution itself is the notion of the moral (and instrumental) duty and the readiness of all members of society (both in Cuba and the world) to ensure the wellbeing of the collectively and to share equitably in the product of collective economic enterprise”. Hence, volunteer brigades reinforce the cultivation of solidarity because they offer the opportunity to Cubans and foreigners to exchange (political) ideas and human capital and development as a continuous revolutionary process. Solidarity work in the form of voluntourism therefore aims to increase economic production and to create personal values (Pagliccia, 2014, 78). Consequently, I asked the volunteers how important it was to show solidarity with Cuba for them (see Figure 8 below). Consequently, they explained what solidarity meant to them in relation to this brigade, and how they experienced solidarity during the brigade. They told me:

*“I experienced solidarity with the people who suffer the consequences of the embargo and the imperialist aggression by the U.S. and European Union. This is solidarity with the socialist state and the Revolution that stays alive after 60 years.”*

*“Solidarity means supporting people who share your own ideas about how the world could be better for everyone and not just for a small elite. It’s about giving them the strength to go further with their battle against the brutal capitalistic system.”*

Other respondents followed this approach:

*“For me, solidarity is expressing my unconditional support to the construction of Cuban socialism, and – when it is necessary – to give a (large) part of my current luxury or prosperity so that we can obtain more prosperity with a larger group.”*

*“Solidarity for me means to support the socialist system psychologically, ideologically and economically, to encourage them (non-Cubans) to follow the principles of their (Cubans’) revolution and not to get trapped in the propaganda and modern-age challenges set by the capitalist U.S., and to try to spread the word in our countries so that mentalities can change in Europe, and why not, follow their steps one day...”*

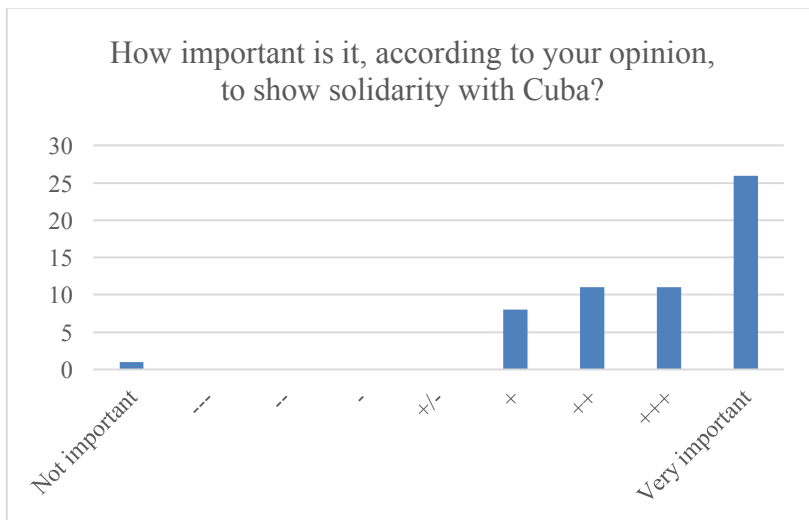


Figure 8: Analysis of the importance to show solidarity with Cuba for volunteers

Solidarity was thus important to support socialism but also as a fight for global justice. For example, the liberation of the Cuban Five was one of the most important campaigns of ICS in Belgium.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, with the brigade, ICAP also strived to end the blockade imposed on Cuba by the U.S.; to dismantle the military base in Guantanamo and to return the illegally occupied territory to Cuba; as well as to end “the political and ideological subversion campaigns promoted by monopolies that control the mainstream media” (see attachment 7.6). During informal conversations with voluntourists, often things like this were stated:

*“The dominant media are only at the pro-American service of thought. We have to spread the truth to dismantle capitalistic propaganda and work against the blockade of the imperialistic powers.”*

*“It’s very important to fight against misinformation, manipulation and the blocking of media which happens to Cuba. We should try to diminish the conscious disinformation that happens every day in our countries.”*

Propaganda, however, was one of the things I noticed the Cuban government could be accused for itself. When I was interviewed for the newspaper Granma (an organ of the PCC), my words were censured and when I wrote to the journalist to ask him why he did that, he never replied (see attachment 7.3). Likewise, during the conferences, presenters also misrepresented Cuban reality, by saying things such as “*in Cuba, discrimination does not exist*” or “*all Cuban beaches are accessible to everyone: tourists and Cubans*”

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<sup>67</sup> The Cuban Five (known in Cuba as *Los Cinco Héroes*) are five Cuban exiles who lived in Miami and who were held in prison by the U.S. from 1998 until 2014. They were conspired from conspiracy to espionage and murder and other illegal activities. They conducted research into terrorist actions planned from the U.S. against Cuba. When they announced those actions to prevent them, they were locked up (Sweig, 2016).

while this was exaggerated or untrue. Moreover, all presentations and activities were under strict governmental control as many staff members were ‘undercover’ state officers. One day, I left the conference hall because I was feeling frustrated. Romero, a Cuban technician who visited the camp sporadically, noticed my mood and approached me saying that: *“This is all bullshit, you know! It’s all propaganda! They’re wasting their time here. They would be better of going to the beach to enjoy Cuba and go back home. Do they really think that this is real and that they help us? They would better spend some money instead of living in a camp attending some conference. It’s a joke to me!”*.

#### **4.3.4 Help, Consciousness or Guilt?**

Why would a tourist prefer to do volunteer work, listen to educational lectures and express solidarity with Cuban people instead of going to a beach resort to relax while on holiday in Cuba? It is interesting to study the deeper motivations of tourists from an anthropological perspective because certain underlying factors are not clear at first sight. Many volunteers explained that they traveled to Cuba to educate themselves on the *real* Cuba. When I asked them after their participation whether the brigade helped them to change their image about Cuba, the opinions were nevertheless divided.<sup>68</sup> Although I had the impression that some seemed to be *brainwashed* by the state propaganda, others critically reflected on what they have had seen and heard:

*“It’s less that the image changed, then that if felt really hard to get a real image of Cuba at all without visiting it because the image brought to us in the media*

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<sup>68</sup> When I asked: ‘did the image that you have about Cuba change by participating in this brigade?’, 41% of the respondents said yes, 27% said no, and 32% replied with partially.



*in Europe seemed to be very one-sided. So now the image is, you might say, clearer.”*

*“What I noticed especially, is that for the older generation of Cubans the revolution is a kind of ‘Holy Grail’ and youngsters do realize what the revolution has done for them, but also want to embrace the technological progress to have more ‘luxury’ in their lives”.*

*“It has become clear to me how limited the resources still are, how poor people are in material wealth, in comparison with us.”*

As I argued in an earlier paper (Rausenberger, 2015b, 11-13), the emergence of this ‘Peace Corps’-style voluntourism is the product of a *guilt-conscious* society.<sup>69</sup> It links the nostalgia of Western moral superiority with colonial historical events while promoting simplistic binaries of *us and them* and the *First World giver – Third World receiver* discourse. Meanwhile, such discourse can either resist or embrace a neoliberalist ideology. Sometimes, it even rejects ideas of modernization, progress and economic development as voluntourists who are keen to learn from local peoples even support pre-existing ways of life (such as communism in Europe). Irrevocably, solidarity in voluntourism is a legitimized and privileged channel for a reflexive process of self-discovery in the dynamism of neoliberal economies construed by a civilizational quest to transform both the Self and the world (Wearing, 2001).

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<sup>69</sup> Peace Corps is a U.S. government-run volunteer program that wants to help people outside the U.S. and to provide assistance. Its website states that: “Peace Corps Volunteers work at the grassroots level to create change that lasts long after their service. As a Volunteer, you can make an investment in our world—one handshake, one project, one friendship at a time—that leads to new possibilities in service and when you return home.” (Peace Corps, 2017).

Pamina Monaco (2016, 14), who conducted research on these brigades as political pilgrimages, argued that “The associations presenting the work brigades on their websites convey a Manichaeian portrait of Cuba and its people, an image that is somehow stuck between the desire for change and recognition, and a veneration for a victimized, exceedingly harmonious, poor-but-strong society committed to resist the capitalism malaise”.

According to the questionnaire, 75% of the respondents was satisfied with the brigade. Participants liked the brigade because it was informative, and because of the opportunity to see *the real Cuba*.<sup>70</sup> Many participants mentioned, however, that they felt as if the volunteer work was more symbolic than really *helping* and that the brigade was more touristic than they expected it to be, which was a little bit disappointing to some:

*“I enjoyed the experience, but it wasn’t what I expected. I thought we would work more and I hoped that the work we did would make a difference or have some impact. In my opinion, the brigade aims to show foreigners the Cuban way of working and living, but it doesn’t bring any improvements or efficiency, or help”.*

*“I count for myself what it was worth. If we worked 2 hours a day effectively, and that during 5 days of work, then you have worked only 10 hours per person. With 4 people, you get to 40 hours, so that is like one work week of a Cuban, who can now enjoy a week of holiday because of us. Well... it was a pleasure.”*

I also asked some of the participants what they had personally done to *help* Cuba:

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<sup>70</sup> Some participants also mentioned that they did not interact as much with local people because they did not speak Spanish.

*“I helped by participated in the brigade and I did volunteer work. I’ve tried to convince as many people as possible to go on a brigade. I also gave a talk about Cuba in my country because I’m trying to become an advocate for the Cubans in my country by volunteering for a Cuban Friendship Association. I try to transmit all the knowledge that Cubans have given me and I post all the good news about the island on social media. I want to bring a different point of view to my country.”*

*“Not sure how I helped, to be honest... I might have boosted their tourism, but that is probably one of the only sectors in the economy that isn’t in need of a boost... I think it’s difficult when we are a tourist to say that we helped Cuba. However, the money we spend in the country is the most important economic resource.”*

*“Cuba rather helped me by making me understand a lot of things. I think that we can learn a lot of them... Maybe I did help by giving some of my clothes away and tried to have chats with some kids, but again, this is more on a personal level. I don’t think I did anything to help Cuba as a country, probably quite the opposite.”*

The guilt-conscious aspect of the brigade became, however, most clear in the analysis of gift-giving in which one of the volunteers said that she gave *“because U.S. capitalism allows us (Europeans) to have everything we want, even if we don’t need it, but they (Cubans) have only what is necessary. They don’t miss anything, they have what they need, but we have more than we need and we interiorize that our consumerism is a necessity. Whereas I have 10 pairs of pants and 20 pairs of shoes, they have only one pair of pants to go out, and one to work, and two pairs of shoes. If something breaks, they arrange it again, they can simply not buy something new”*. From statements like this, it became clear that voluntourism is not just

about helping or giving, but about guilt-conscious feelings and compassion towards impoverished communities. As Mostafanezhad (2013) noted, voluntourism indeed a compassionate type of tourism which intensifies neoliberalist tendencies through commodifying global justice and development agendas.

Almost 90% of the respondents also expressed that they would continue to show solidarity with Cuba after their participation in the brigade by their “attitude of compassion” (as a volunteer called it) promoting Cuban socialism in their country through presentations and talks about the *real* situation in Cuba, spreading *the truth* about Cuba and by promoting the volunteer brigade amongst acquaintances in Cuban solidarity groups. As one volunteer commented: “*I will become an ambassador of Cuba as my Cuban comrades proposed because I believe that without it, this system that puts people first and money second would be perished*”.

Hence, there is a level of political consciousness that becomes strengthened after participation in such a brigade, which empowers feelings of guilt towards the European model of neoliberalist capitalism amongst volunteers. Or in the words of another *brigadista*: “*if we are truly democratic people, we should work towards political civilization and humanity for all despite our ideological differences*”. In Hollander’s work (1981) on political pilgrims and tourists, he argued that ideologies are a type of faith which results in an uncritical engagement with experiences.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Likewise, Monaco (2016, 6) heavily critiqued volunteer work in Cuba because they lack a critical position towards a nuanced perspective on Cuba’s social reality: “Delicate questions such as the dual monetary system that leads many educated people to leave their job to enter the more enriching tourist market, the racism between foreign and Cuban people but also within the Cuban population, the lack of freedom of speech, the lack of multiple political parties, the part of the Cuban population that migrate

### 4.3.5 Towards the Politics of Affect

From the arguments mentioned above, it has become clear that the focus of voluntary work and solidarity in these brigades is not necessarily to bring help and development to Cuba, but rather to bring Cuba's reality and justice to the world. This is a significant difference with voluntourism in other countries, where the activities are not overlooked by a socialist government, because in Cuba, support and help are more symbolically. As one volunteer told me, "*When you show solidarity with a cause, any cause, it means it has affected you in anyway. And that's a good thing. It's also that which draws people to your cause - when they feel that what you're saying is real. And you can only do that, after being emerged in a culture, long enough to feel its difficulties*". I argue that the relationship between voluntourism and political solidarity relies on affective investment and the mobilization of affect in a touristic context.

Cuban politics draw heavily on the role that affect and emotions play in voluntourism and incorporate this as a strategy to promote socialism (Fernández, 2000). Emotions and affect are not only important in politics but also in instrumental exchanges and intimate relationships because they justify actions and feelings.<sup>72</sup> From the tourist side, I argue that the underlying motivation to get to know the *real* Cuba, to help Cubans, to fight for social justice and to raise awareness about the sociopolitical situation of Cuba is driven by affect as well. It influences how and why they immerse themselves and how they relate to Cubans. As Doerr & Taïeb (2017, 7) noted: "the affect evoked by volunteering abroad – ranging from a sense of being useful and loved to guilt and doubt – are managed by

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elsewhere, the imprisonment of political opponents (Spencer, 2010; Sanchez & Adams, 2007), these are all questions that are not discussed."

<sup>72</sup> As Eric Shouse (2005, 5) notes: "An affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential. ... Affect is always prior to and/or outside of consciousness."

participants as they evaluate their experience”. The role of such politics of affect will become even clearer in the next sections on more socio-economic topics, such as philanthropic gift-giving, reciprocity, and jineterismo.

## **4.4 The Sentimental Politics of Economic Exchanges**

### **4.4.1 Philanthropic Gift-Giving & Reciprocity**

*“I guess the solidarity aspect first began to dawn on me after some days in the camp. Here, solidarity basically means showing that not all Western countries think and feel the same way about Cuba as the U.S. I felt this solidarity during the brigade when I had conversations with the Cubans who were part of the camp. For me, solidarity means to help who is sitting in front of you, because he is your comrade... By participating in this brigade, I feel like I could show Cuban people that they’re not alone. We should support them in these difficult times. I think I did that by my volunteer work and by giving gifts.”*

As this quote of a participant in the brigade illustrates, voluntourism and solidarity are not just affected by political motivations. It is also about the establishment of intimate relationships in which voluntourists give *the gift of volunteer work* (to quote a volunteer) and act as philanthropists. This philanthropic gift-giving is affected as well by political ideologies, a guilt-conscious awareness and morality. As another volunteer said to me, gift-giving is inherently connected to expressing solidarity:

*“Because of the embargo, no matter what's happening, it's a matter of gifts to people. I think it is very important to make a clear distinction between gifts and things they*

*really need. It's important to take things that Cubans don't have, for example Band-Aids (because there are none) and clothes because clothing there is expensive. That is support, solidarity. What I don't consider a good idea is bringing things that aren't necessary, such as make-up. From time to time you make capitalism more attractive to people and it isn't the idea."*

It can be derived from this statement that gift-giving is part of solidarity, not because of its economic value but because it is an expression of symbolic and moral support. The circulation and exchange of gifts is the basis of social solidarity between people. Marcel Mauss (1969) who theorized gift-giving, argued that gifts are given and reciprocated with certain interest. Giving, receiving and reciprocating economic and symbolic gifts as circulating goods and values to promote ties and bonding between individuals, explains also why I noticed that certain forms of reciprocal transactions emerged within the context of this brigade.

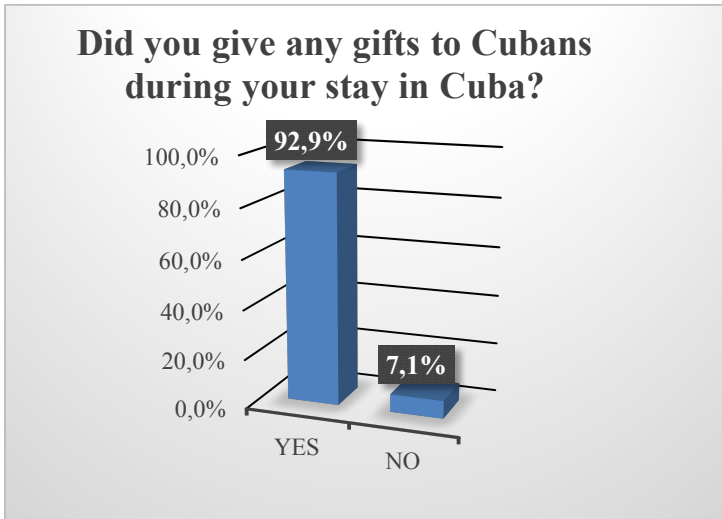
Voluntourists want to give back to society by doing voluntary work. According to the theory of Mauss (1969, 83-84), this is at odds with moral standards: "The unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior, particularly when it has been accepted with no thought of returning it. ... Charity is still wounding for him who has accepted it, and the whole tendency of our morality is to strive to do away with the unconscious and injurious patronage of the rich almsgiver". But is Cuban voluntourism in form of solidarity brigades by ICAP merely an act of charity? I argue that the, so to speak, charitable character of voluntourism is not.

The government returns the reciprocal relationship with awareness and deepened knowledge about the *real* Cuba, and the courtesy of *friendship* with the Cuban people. In return, the cycle of immaterial gift goes on: volunteers become *ambassadors for the Cuban cause* who will promote Cuban socialism abroad. Meanwhile,

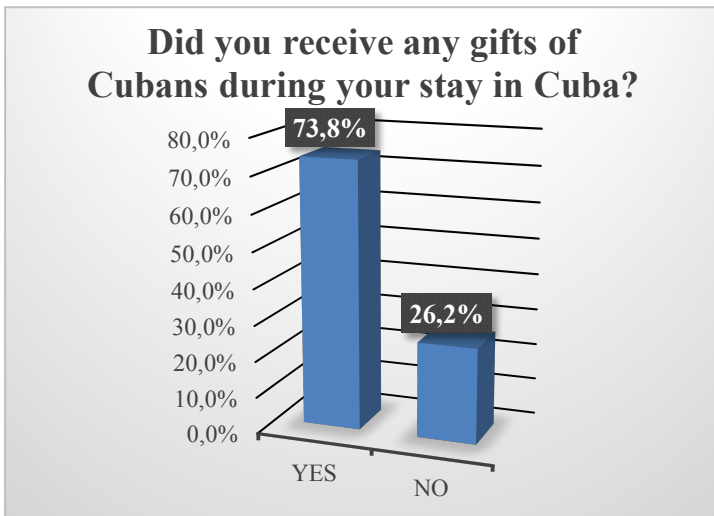
volunteers work on their self-development and want to feel useful. Mauss' (1969, 4) words were indeed correct: "the so to speak voluntary character of these total services, apparently free and disinterested but nevertheless constrained and self-interested". In his work on development tourism, Salazar (2004, 92) also spelled this out: "philanthropic aspirations often mask hard-nosed, immediate self-interest".

Of course, there were also given and returned material gifts in Cuba. 93% of the respondents of the questionnaire said that they have given gifts to Cubans, whereas almost 74% had been given gifts by Cubans (see Figure 9 and 10 below). The most popular given gifts were (used) clothes and shoes: "*because I had the feeling that they could use it more than me*" and hygienic products, such as soap, deodorants, shampoo and tooth paste: "*because it's not easy for them to buy, and it's absolutely necessary*", the volunteers explained. Some also gave school materials, toys for kids, souvenirs from their home countries, or useful personal items (such as towels and medicines) to the personnel of the camp "*because for them it is luxury and for us rather basic*". One respondent told me that she didn't want to give these things personally, because she didn't want it to look condescending of her but that she still wanted to give it because "*their need was greater than mine*". So, she decided to leave it behind in her room. Such thoughtful comment indicated that there are certain power dynamics at play. I will discuss the problematics of inequality in social relationships in the next section.





*Figure 9: Distribution of voluntourists giving gifts to Cubans*



*Figure 10: Distribution of voluntourists receiving gifts of Cubans*

The gifts that voluntourists received of Cubans were of a very different kind and were mostly immaterial. Although they were not as costly or materialistically valuable, they were given and appreciated as a reciprocal act of (mutual) moral obligation. Volunteers considered friendship, hospitality and conversations most remarkable gifts. As a volunteer told me:

*“They gave me their unending hospitality. When I went for a walk in Caimito, I was thirsty. A lady who I didn’t know approached me and welcomed me into her house. She gave me a glass of water without me asking for it. And she even asked me if I wanted to eat something”.*

Others mentioned *regalitos de amor y amistad* (small gifts of love and friendship), such as gestures, small token presents, handmade things:

*“They (gifts) were given by persons with whom I had a good relationship in Cuba and who became friends. Moreover, they always (!!!) helped me when I needed help. The Cubans have a very big heart! Maybe the greatest gift I received was a beautiful memory to this trip!”.*

Help, care, and attention of Cubans were indeed particularly appreciated by the volunteers because it was considered sincere and respectful, and it made volunteers feel as if they had friends in Cuba:

*“I know it's difficult for most of them to make ends meet, so giving me presents means they might lack milk or rice for a day or so. Furthermore, it's a reflection of their mentality, a sign of generosity and hospitality, which is something I particularly appreciate”.*

*“They (gifts) were offered without any ulterior motive, with true ‘cariño’ (sweetness), respect and gratitude for us being there, being brigadistas, friends of Cuba”.*

By studying the meaning of gifts given and received within the context of a volunteer brigade and between Cubans and voluntourists, it became clear that there is, in fact, no such thing as a free gift. As with the motivations discussed in the previous section, there are underlying motives that enhance these acts of solidarity and philanthropy. As Mary Douglas (as cited in Mauss, 1969, xii) said: “There are no free gifts; gift cycles engage persons in permanent commitments that articulate the dominant institutions”. Mauss (1969) indeed wrote that people give so that others may give and return.

#### **4.4.2 The Everyday Struggle of *La Lucha***

It was a very hot afternoon when the volunteers and I were walking through the historic center of Havana during a free moment to go souvenir shopping. I estimate that it was about 40 degrees Celsius. When we passed an ice cream stand, Angél (our Cuban group leader) invited us for an ice cream. The sign stated “\$1”. I counted that there were 14 persons, so he had to pay 14 dollars (CUC). This is a lot for a Cuban, knowing that this is half of a monthly wage. Everybody was amazed: “*Wow, this is so generous of you! You didn’t have to do this. You’re too kind!*”, said one of us. “*Don’t worry about it. You’ve already treated me with many things. It’s my pleasure if I can invite you back*”, he replied. I noticed how good he felt being in a powerful position. But, when I talked to him privately, I asked him whether he really paid that much money on ice creams. “*Of course not, are you crazy? I only paid 14 pesos, I didn’t pay the tourist price. Just keep this between us, okay? I want these tourists to think that I paid a lot,*

so they will leave me a tip at the end of the program. Like this, they will think that I gave a lot to them too!”, he confessed.<sup>73</sup>

This anecdote, which I wrote down in fieldnotes, suggests that inequality and power dynamics are heavily at play in relationships between Cubans and tourists. In Cuba, it is common that Cubans pay in Cuban pesos (CUP) while tourists pay in Cuban Convertible (CUC), because of *tourist apartheid* on the one hand and as an effort by the government to create equal opportunities (in this case, the possibility to buy an ice cream) for Cubans. However, most tourists do not know this and become the *victim* of deceptive practices like the one mentioned here. Whereas this Cuban did return the favor or the gift, the monetary value of his gift was intentionally unequal. Cubans manage to get in their daily struggle by adapting creative techniques. Because it can provide them much more money than their official income, gift-giving or treats are important aspects of relationships with tourists for Cubans that offer them many opportunities. Kaifa Roland (2011, 65) wrote about this struggle (called *la lucha* in Cuba) in her book *Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha* as well.<sup>74</sup>

For an average Cuban, *la lucha* represents the desire to break out from a constrained socialist society while witnessing tourists experiencing a more capitalist and leisurely lifestyle. Thereby,

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<sup>73</sup> 1 USD (\$) or 1 CUC was equivalent to +/- 25 Cuban pesos at the time of conducting research.

<sup>74</sup> In her book, Roland (2011, 46) explained that “the historical-political meaning of the Spanish word *lucha* – a noun (or verb; *luchar*) that means ‘struggle’ or ‘fight’(involves) a way to acquire dollars by any means in the name of the revolution. The primary meaning of *la lucha* originates in the way the Cuban government has defined ‘revolution’. ... The Cuban people have been *luchando* (struggling) to fulfill their revolutionary goals of building a politically and economically self-sufficient nation-state that can provide for the basic needs of all its citizens and support other, less developed countries in doing the same”.

Cubans use subtle techniques of deception, as illustrated by the example above. The results of my questionnaire confirmed this statement: 71,4 % of the voluntourists found that Cubans did not ask them to give something, whereas I often observed that Cubans did ask for it (see Figure 11 below). The respondents also commented (in the ‘other’ section on this question) with statements as:

*“All the Cubans that we interacted with during the brigade program were full of dignity, never begged, and never tried to extort. At the same time, they didn’t have a foul’s pride, they could understand our respectful intention to offer something useful for them without taking advantage”.*

Another voluntourist commented:

*“They really gave all they have! For their standards, it very valuable and therefore, for me as well. It came from their heart. I believe that pure intention is what really counts”.*

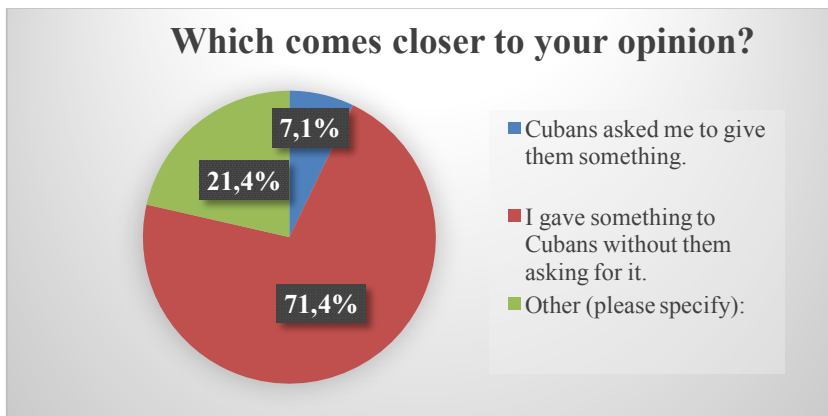


Figure 11: Analysis of motivation for voluntourists to give to Cubans

The fact that participants were convinced of Cubans' pure intention was not only confirmed by my questionnaire, but also became clear towards the end of the program when I heard my roommates talking about tips. *"What shall we give to the staff members? If we give 5 CUC to each of them that would be a little bit much, right? Maybe we should give 1 CUC to each of them? That's a little bit fairer"*, said Phaedra. *"I'm not sure. Are we supposed to give tips?"*, I asked curiously (anticipating more information).<sup>75</sup> *"I don't know, but Maria (one of the group leaders) asked me to have my hat. My hat seems to be wanted here in Cuba. I told her that I would give it at the end of my stay here, and then we talked about tipping"*.

Likewise, Maria approached me: *"Julie, I am talking to participants from different countries to gather some souvenirs to collect on my brigade altar at home to have some kind of memory. Could you find me something Belgian?"*. I wanted to test her reaction and so I said: *"Well, I already gave many things away, but maybe I can give you my Belgian brigade T-shirt?"* (see attachment 7.2). She replied: *"Oh...sure. But maybe talk with your group to see what you can arrange?"*. She didn't look precisely satisfied with my offer, and I had the impression that she hoped for the tip she had been discussing with Phaedra as well.

Whereas some would argue that Maria is deceiving people to gain materialism for her personal interest, those who understand the complexity of *la lucha* in Cuba would contextualize situations like this within the contemporary economic hardship Cubans experience. As Roland (2011, xi) argued: "increased individualism and decline in state authority in Cuba's late socialist context, showing how revolutionary ethics and propaganda are often at odds with what people must do to get by". This ethnographic research shed light on this struggle within the boundaries of a voluntouristic trip where the

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<sup>75</sup> 5 CUC was equivalent to 4,50 EUR at the time of research.

contact between Cubans and tourists were colored by such dynamics of solidarity and individualism simultaneously.

This argument can be confirmed by another illustration. One day, when we were planning to go to Playa Tarará, Maria showed up in front of our room. Although she was officially not allowed to enter the room, she sneaked into the room with an excuse: she didn't have a bikini. One of my roommates, Phaedra, had compassion with her and offered her own bikini. "*You can keep it. Don't worry.*", she said. Was Maria really in need of a bikini or was this one of her subtle techniques to acquire material goods or cash? With a rising trend towards individualistic and materialistic lifestyles in Cuba and a declining power of the government, the very meaning of *la lucha* becomes an easy excuse to justify acts of moral ambiguity to engage in practices to obtain material goods: over time it transitioned from a survival strategy towards an advancement strategy.

In his work on the politics of affection, Fernández (2000) argued that Cubans justify their participation in such practices by combining the affective and the personal with trust and solidarity, which has been exactly what Cubans did in the volunteer program. The struggle is a way for Cubans to deal with the limitations of the local economy, to circumvent socialist politics, and to satisfy certain (non)material needs in life. Doerr & Taïeb (2017) looked at the management of affect within touristic settings and found that affect is purposefully molded by actors in touristic environments to foster warmth and to create solidary subjectivities. I therefore argue that the sentimental politics of affect strengthen reciprocal relationships because of the underlying feelings of compassion.

#### 4.4.3 Scams, Hustlers & Jineteros

Within the framework of sentimentality, intimacy and morality, I also looked at the maximization of benefits that derived from the relationships between Cubans and tourists. Hereby, I paid attention to the social implications of reciprocity in touristic encounters which provide a privileged platform for Cubans where various forms of intimacy can be acted out. As mentioned earlier, Cubans continue to suffer under the regime and increasingly experience economic hardship since the Special Period. Cubans who do not work in tourism or who do not receive money from abroad, need to get by with 20 to 30 CUC per month.<sup>76</sup>

Consequently, many Cubans use creative ways to make ends meet. Some even feel like they do not have a chance to a better life in Cuba, and therefore want to try life abroad. *“I’m going to Miami soon. I was invited by a family member. He’s married to an American girl. Can you image that I will be able to earn thousands of dollars there?!”*, said Julio, a Cuban in the camp. But, for most Cubans it is impossible to leave Cuba without an invitation. In this section, I critically analyze the most common scam and hustling practices in Cuba, as well as the phenomenon jineterismo from an anthropological perspective.

Before travelling to Cuba, ICS already warned the Belgian participants for jineteros, black markets and tipping. During the travel preparation meetings, our group leader talked about all kind of scams: from fake cigars to fake friendships and hidden prostitution: *“They will fool you once, but hopefully not twice!”*, they advised us. We were told not to buy rum and cigars on black markets or in the streets, not to give tips because they contribute to the strengthening

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<sup>76</sup> 20 to 30 CUC was equivalent to 18 to 27 EUR at the time of conducting research.



of social inequality.<sup>77</sup> They also warned us for jineteros: “*Under the influence of tourism, combined with a difficult economic situation, prostitution has increased. Of course, we do not participate in this but you can expect to be approached by prostitutes! Keep in mind that it is not about survival, but to access luxury products and money... or to escape Cuba via a relationship with a tourist from the rich West*”.<sup>78</sup> Although such explanation of the phenomenon might be sufficient to warn tourists, it is too simplistic and generalizing from an anthropological point of view.

When anthropologically examining jineterismo, one can see that it can be distinguished from prostitution by its performance, motivation, and situational aspect (Alcazar Campos, 2010). Jineterismo is not just about prostitution, it is about the desire to access hard currency and the dream of many Cubans to participate in a larger global community (Roland, 2011). It usually does not involve single-event transactional sex, but a more complex (non-sexual) intent to establish long-term relationships because these can provide more access to consumer goods (and possibly also a visa to leave the island). The behavior of Angél and Maria, which I illustrated above, is an example of the subtle techniques Cubans use

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<sup>77</sup> As Feinberg & Newfarmer (2016, 26) noted, in Cuba, gratuities from tourists can far exceed Cuban base wages: “we spoke to workers (working in the tourism industry) who indicated that while their base wage was CUP 600 or \$25 per month, they received tips in hard currencies of up to \$300 a month during the high season”.

<sup>78</sup> In the ICS publication *Cuba: another trip is possible*, Carpentier et al. (2008) wrote that there are a few ways to recognize jineteros/as: someone who you can't get rid of or who always seems to show up “accidentally”; someone who frequent touristic attractions and who approaches you in English with some pretext; complains straight away about poverty, sick relatives, lack of medicines, corrupt officials, ... and who accepts money easily; someone who invites you for drinks and dinners (preferably with other friends and family), and then expects you to pay everything; a big age difference; and fancy clothing that suggest frequent contact with tourists.

in everyday situations to deal with their struggle to survive or to advance their lifestyle.

Tourism exposed Cubans with modest means to an appealing consumerist lifestyle. As I mentioned in earlier work (Rausenberger, 2015b), tourists become a reference group for the host society, providing a platform to host communities to access a middle-class lifestyle and its accompanying commodities. In that sense, as Gmelch, (2010, 2012) noted, it can produce undesirable cultural changes in attitude, values or behavior, such as mimicking host behavior, dependency, feelings of deprivation, drugs, crime, and prostitution, or in the case of Cuba: jineterismo. Inequality is seen as an important issue because tourists are included whereas Cubans are excluded from the global economy, remarked Roland (2011, 42):

“Cubans are being treated as outsiders to the spaces of luxury and leisure offered to foreigners by the new tourism. In both ways, the post-Soviet context of socialist limitations amid capitalist excesses situates Cubans closer to the bottom of the global racial hierarchy than the revolution promised.”

As I wrote in another paper (Rausenberger, 2016, 20), the ambiguous connotations of jinetero (as hustler or prostitute or struggler) resulted in a complex new social hierarchy that was not universal in society. Because it was difficult to talk about a sensitive topic such as jineterismo within the volunteer brigade context (as there was a strict governmental control and Cuban authorities did not like to talk about phenomena that are embarrassing in the context of the Cuban revolutionary ideals), few of my Cuban interlocutors talked about it. Some said jinetero was a synonym for prostitute while others argued: “*you need talent and creativity to be a jinetero! It’s not so easy: you need to speak English, you have to be subtle to avoid problems with the police, and you need to know how to approach tourists!*”. Some Cubans were proud to be jineteros: for

them *jinetear* was *maquinar* (making things work) because the ingeniousness required by these informal operations resulted in them to be creative artists who are masters in dealing with difficult situations and people.

However, most Cubans did not call themselves *jineteros* but *luchadores*: people who struggle and fight within the hardship of the Special Period. In fact, some even argue that all Cubans are *jineteros* because *la lucha* is part of the Cuban way of life. As Fernández (2010, 131) wrote: “*jineteando* was the uniquely Cuban attempt for individuals to integrate themselves into the global market economy at whatever level and through whatever means”. Many Cubans perceive this behavior (in which *means became ends*) as a necessity. It is therefore morally not questionable.

#### 4.4.4 Towards A Double Moral

*Ser solidario sale caro.* - Puicercús Vázquez (2014, 34)<sup>79</sup>

One of the main motivations why voluntourists participated in the brigade was because they desired to express solidarity with the Cuban people and revolution. With reciprocity being an important factor in human social solidarity, I built further on the work of Marcel Mauss (1969) to analyze reciprocal relationships between Cubans and voluntourists. I found out that within this context, both actors have their interest to involve in reciprocal relationships, and that gifts were given for a reason.<sup>80</sup> An old Latin principle *do ut des*

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<sup>79</sup> My translation: “Being supportive turns out expensive”.

<sup>80</sup> In another paper (Rausenberger, 2015b), I have discussed voluntourists’ personal interest in voluntourism into depth. In this thesis, I focus more on the relationships between Cubans and voluntourists while emphasizing the interest they have in each other and what they hope to gain from the encounter in terms of personal aspects.

(I give so that you may give) helped to explain the moral obligation to give and receive within these encounters (Mauss, 1969).

I argue that (im)material transactions between tourists and Cubans are compelled by sentimental politics that surround these social politics. Hereby, I mean that there are preconceived ideas and political influences that affect people's emotions, resulting in sentimental behavior. Voluntourists traditionally consider themselves *givers* (with money) in opposition to people from the people living in the communities where they work being more passive *receivers* (without money). Simultaneously, they also desire the simplicity of life in those communities and romanticize certain aspects of their lives. For example, a participant argued: "*This is something that we, in the West, can learn of: Cubans give much more of what they have while they have much less than us*". There is also a clash between morality and inequality within the instrumental character of these power relationships. As two volunteers discussed:

*"I believe we have to support Cubans to help them end the blockade imposed by the U.S., but they don't need our help because they already proved that they can do it without us", one said.*

*"I agree, but we shouldn't help them. Okay, we have more than them, but no one gives us our money and stuff for free either, we have to work for it as well. I don't think it's the role of tourists to take care of Cuba's homeless and helpless. That's the Cuban society's responsibility", said the other.*

Cubans, on the other hand, experience a double moral because of the gap between reality and idealism. On the one hand, the political culture of socialism is an important value for Cuban people which they respect a lot. On the other hand, jineteros – who struggle to overcome the economy's limitations – disrespect this political

culture by acting immorally. This tension between materialism/individualism and socialism/collectivity was created by the introduction of a dual economy (CUP and CUC) and international tourism. As capitalistic interventions were used by the Cuban government to save its socialist system, it can even be argued that the government itself is *jineteando* because it applies a double moral as well.

Nevertheless, inequality amongst Cubans and foreigners increased since the Special Period. As argued in earlier work (Rausenberger, 2016c), some engaged in jineterismo to acquire money, advance their lifestyle, and access consumer goods. For most Cubans, however, jineterismo was closer related to *la lucha* and operating in informal activities outside the state's control to resolve (*pa'resolver*) out of necessity. For the latter, jineterismo was the result of a harsh reality that every Cuban faced but the government does not like to admit this because it proofs that some of the moral values of socialism failed. That is why it was difficult studying jineterismo during a volunteer brigade organized by a governmental institution in Cuba. Not surprisingly, a popular saying in Cuba is *todos somos jineteros*.<sup>81</sup>

## 4.5 Something Special? On Intimate Relationships

### 4.5.1 What It Means to be Lovers & Friends in Cuba

In recent decades, there has been increasing interest in the anthropological discipline to study the dynamics of intimacy (love, friendship and family).<sup>82</sup> In this thesis, I aim to study the social

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<sup>81</sup> My translation: “we are all hustling to make ends meet”.

<sup>82</sup> Alcázar Campos, 2010; Brennan, 2011; Cabezas, 2004; Cante, 2013; Conran, 2011; Daigle, 2015; Doerr & Taïeb, 2017; Fernández, 1999, 2000, 2010; Fusco, 1998; Herold, García & De Moya, 2001; Hodge, 2005; Maclaran et al., 2005; Mains, 2013; Markowitz & Ashkenazi, 1999; Mead,

aspect of intimacy by using Schutz's (1967) social phenomenology – the study of everyday experiences emphasizing a contextual understanding and intersubjective meanings of events – as a point of view that helps to shed light on the different meaning given to intimacy in Cuba compared to the meaning it is given in Europe (Schutz, 1967).

The European perception of romantic love has resulted in an understanding of intimacy that does not always match the way in which relationships are understood in Cuba. Love is a certain contention of intimacy that is interpreted differently on a local level. Love is therefore not a universal phenomenon, but a cultural and often political dimension of intimacy in relationships. We could say that romantic love is a Western-styled invention, whereas love for Cubans, sometimes is a (justified) economic advancement strategy. Or as Zelizer (as cited in Daigle, 2015, 75) already noted: "Far from necessarily contaminating a loving relationship, financial support often plays an affirmative, reinforcing role: money cohabits regularly with intimacy, even sustains it."

Giving gifts (or money) – as an inextricable part of intimate relationships – is in European norms contrary to the ideal of a pure romance, but because of increasing waves of consumerism, there is a gradual merging of consumption and romantic love. This is called *the commodification of romance*, in which romanticism is associated with gifts, such as engagement ring. This neoliberal ideology has made people become consumers, also in terms of intimate relationships, and consumption has become a means of managing relationships (Maclaran et al., 2005). Sometimes, this is referred to as *the economy of love*. Sexual relationships thereby have an important economic content but are independent of prostitution, or as Mauss (1969) already concluded: gifts are at the base of social ties.

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1986; Palmié, 2004; Pruitt & La Font, 2010; Roland, 2011; Simoni, 2013; Zelizer, 2007.

In his article on friendship in Ethiopia, Daniel Mains (2013) analyzes how friendship between young men in Ethiopia is characterized by affection and reciprocity in the form of exchanging goods. In Africa, affection and instrumentality go hand in hand, he argued. Hence, Mains' claim: "To love is to give and to give is to love" (344). Mains' study also showed that you can also reciprocate with affection rather than with material matters. That is what characterizes a *true friendship* in Ethiopia. Such anthropological understanding of friendship and love is important to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings. I claim that in Cuba as well, the friend who gives the most is perceived as the one who loves you most. A comment by Leo, a Cuban in the camp, strengthens my argument:

*"I don't get you Belgians... You spend time with each other every day but when it comes to sharing your stuff, you're so individualistic. Why didn't Emilie share those cookies with you guys? I thought you were friends!"*

Leo's incomprehension illustrates that for Cubans friendship and reciprocity are inherently intertwined. The circulation of objects, solidarity and gifts among friends thus become meaningful, not only because of their economic sake but also because of their social purpose. This explains why a gift is ideally not reciprocated with material matters, but with affection.

In one of my papers (Rausenberger, 2016b, 19), I argued that the rise of the informal economy, known in Cuba as *sociolismo* (cronyism/buddyism), characterizes the meaning of friendships in Cuba: "these informal intimate networks relied upon mutual trust, reciprocity and interdependence". Within *sociolismo*, Cubans manage to get access to consumer goods, services and social positions through networks of friends. The politics of affect are extremely important here because it is a "system of access to goods and social standing based on who you know and who you love" as Fernández (2000, 110) explained. Hence, intimacy is part of the

struggle of Cubans to overcome economic necessities and climb up the social ladder in society. This confirms Mains' (2013) theory on the economic dimension of friendships because it equates the value of money with friendship.<sup>83</sup>

Being friends in Cuba means that you understand their *lucha* (struggle). Likewise, I noticed that my relationship with some Cubans developed into a *real* friendship when I started to take part in their struggle. Towards the end of the brigade, most voluntourists planned to travel back from the camp to Havana for a last night in the capital before heading back home. As one of my Cuban informants, Angél, told me that he had a car, I came up with an idea: “Listen! I have an idea! I’ll ask the volunteers whether they already have planned their transfers from Havana to the airport. If not, I can give them your number so that you can take them there. You could charge 20 CUC instead of the average price of 30 CUC for a tourist taxi drive. I think most of them will do it, because they know you and would love to see you again!”, I suggested. “That’s a great idea! If I manage to take 20 volunteers to the airport, I would earn 400 CUC! That’s amazing! If it works out, we’ll go travel Playa de Jibacoa together and we’ll go partying! But make sure nobody of ICAP knows about this, okay?”, he said.<sup>84</sup>

A few days later, Angél ended up earning more money in 3 days than during the whole program together. He was feeling euphoric. We drove to the beach and went camping. He paid the gasoline for the car and I paid our lodging at *Campismo Los Cocos*. The rest of our travel costs we shared. One night, when we were sitting on the beach, I asked Angél what a true friendship meant to him. He said that:

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<sup>83</sup> Fernández (2000, 107) defined the informal economy as “a broad term for a variety of practices associated with the black market, or underground economy, outside the control and legal provisions of the state economy”.

<sup>84</sup> 400 CUC was equivalent to 360 EUR at the time of conducting research.



*“A real friend shares the good and the bad moments, he supports you in difficult times, he shares your pain and he enjoys your happiness. But to be honest, here in Cuba, we say ‘el que tiene un amigo tiene un peso en el bolsillo’.<sup>85</sup> Money is your best friend, but if you don’t have it, like us in Cuba, you rely upon your friends to get things done. That’s exactly what you did, and that’s why I consider you my friend now.”*

This anecdote illustrates that personal networks of friends are more meaningful for Cubans because the affective can forge economic support and weaken the everyday struggle of life. Fernández (2000, 107) describes this as: “Personal relations are a resource, a form of capital – network capital – for they can provide access to different goods and services” which are not available within the confines of the socialist regime.

#### **4.5.2 More than Friends: On Romanticization**

Friendship is an important aspect of Cuba’s solidarity work. The organizing institution ICAP is named for a reason *The Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples*.<sup>86</sup> With the questionnaire, I aimed to understand how the participants understood the meaning of *friendship* in this title. Most respondents gave a more political answer:

*“The feeling of community and unity, based on expressing solidarity and mutual support for Cuba’s*

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<sup>85</sup> My translation: ‘those who have a friend have a dollar in their pocket’.

<sup>86</sup> In the program description of ICAP (Rodríguez, 2016), the organization states that: “The realization of voluntary work as support to the country’s agricultural and productive development have contributed to the expansion of the solidarity movement and to strengthening mutual understanding and friendship between Cuba and the other peoples of the world”.

*struggle among the peoples of the world who have no reason to be divided or fighting each other.”*

*“This "friendship" refers to those who sympathize in all parts of the world with those who are oppressed by a capitalist, imperialist system. It is the friendship between Cubans with people who sympathize with Cuban socialism and fight for a world in which all can live in peace and dignity.”*

*“I think it refers to political relationships rather than emotional ones, since they did not encourage us to get together with the people who compose Cuba at the foot of the street.”*

Others defined this friendship more socially:

*“This friendship is about an equal relationship between different peoples in the world, without judging each other but by mutual respect and learning about each other’s culture.”*

*“It is about friendship between brigadistas of various countries and Cubans who meet each other based on their shared solidarity with Cuba... It is about exchanges and a genuine spirit of solidarity despite their cultural / political / financial differences”.*

Friendship is indeed not just political. It is also about friendship between people. During the preparation sessions of ICS, the voluntourists and I were told that we would make many new friendships with Cubans and fellow participants. Of all respondents who filled out my questionnaire, 81% indeed claimed to have made

friends in Cuba.<sup>87</sup> In order of importance, voluntourists described their friendships with Cubans as ‘warm-hearted’, ‘equal’, ‘real’, ‘caring’, and ‘trustworthy’. Categories that scored less were ‘giving’, ‘reliable’, and ‘like-minded’. The least agreed upon category was ‘for life’ (see Figure 12 below).<sup>88</sup>

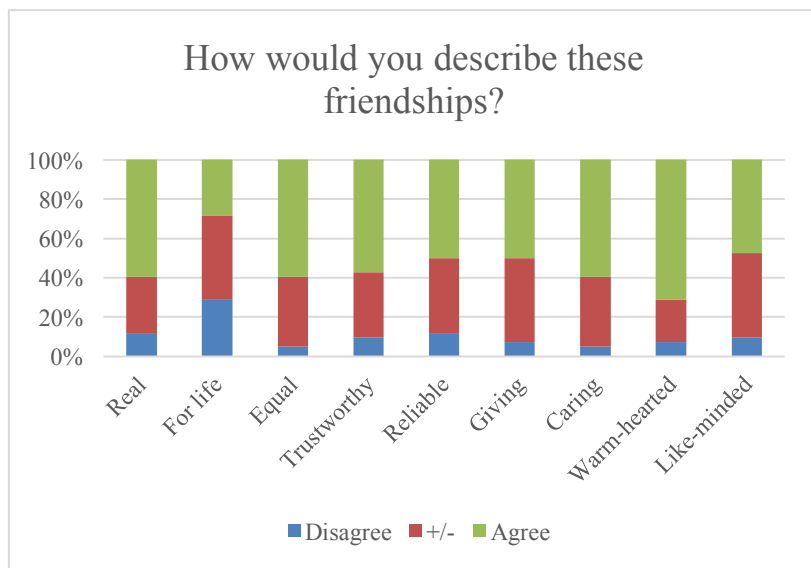


Figure 12: Analysis of friendships’ characteristics by voluntourists

Overall, many voluntourists also categorized these friendships as (very) meaningful (see Figure 13 below). Most comments accompanying these responses were very positive:

<sup>87</sup> Of the other 19% of the respondents, 5% said that they did not make friends in Cuba, and 14% selected ‘Other’.

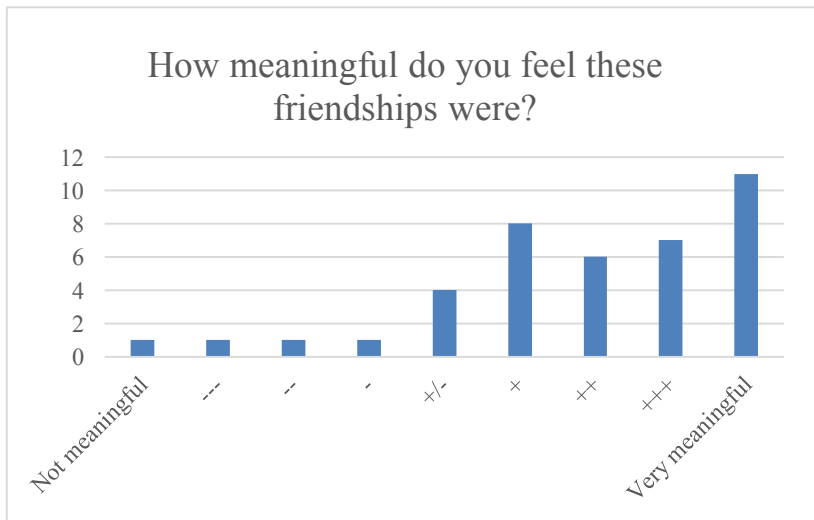
<sup>88</sup> As one volunteer told me: “*To be honest, I don’t think these friendships will last, but we’ll try to keep in touch. I just know that long distance friendships cannot be compared to friends you see every week in person.*”

*“All Cubans are my friends and I consider my Cuban friends as my family”.*

*“My Cuban friends are not friends for me, they are my brothers and my sisters”.*

In contrast, few responses were very sceptical and negative. For example:

*“Maybe they are meaningful for Cubans to get a ticket out of the country.”*



*Figure 13: Analysis of the meaning attached to friendships by voluntourists*

Within the discipline of anthropology, the fact that many voluntourists considered these friendships so meaningful, can be explained by the theory on *communitas*, as developed by the anthropologist Victor Turner (1967). The term *communitas* refers to

a sense of community or social bonding which is generated spontaneously. Such comradeship typically occurs in the liminal phase of individuals who are temporarily detached from their daily life or social status. Within the *communitas*, Turner (1969) argued, interpersonal relationships develop because of these feelings of togetherness, solidarity and affinity. In my paper on voluntourism (Rausenberger, 2015b, 9), I argued that voluntouristic situations offer an opportunity to volunteers to socialize and make friends: “Volunteering produces a special kind of bonding amongst voluntourists as they are going through a similar experience and exchange like-minded ideas”. This explains why the established friendships during the volunteer brigade were considered meaningful.

In contrast, the friendships that voluntourists developed with Cubans during the brigade had a different character. Firstly, these friendships were marked by power and inequality. In her work on *Intimacy in Volunteer Tourism*, anthropologist Mary Conran (2011, 1455) argued that intimacy “overshadows the structural inequalities on which the (volunteer tourism) encounter is based and reframes the structural inequalities as a question of individual morality. This reframing contributes to a cultural politics”. Although voluntourists were inclined to downplay such inequalities, they infused the reciprocity and gift-giving between Cubans and voluntourists, which in return had affective outcomes and reframed the relational idioms between both actors. While their sentiments may be sincere, they were also political and cultural. As I noted elsewhere (Rausenberger, 2015a, 21), “... the intimacy of the encounter is brought to the foreground, while the commercial nature of the experience is hidden from the voluntourists’ point of view. In this way, the volunteer feels more like a “guest” than a customer and the staff is more regarded as a “friendly helper” (Cabezas, 2004; Mostafanezhad, 2014; Wearing, 2001)”.

Secondly, there was also a widespread romanticization of people present in the voluntouristic environment of the brigade. Voluntourists were clearly in favor of an appreciation for a basic and more *authentic* lifestyle and *poor-but-happy* mentality of Cubans. In this regard, I noticed that a Cuban told voluntourists: “*I’m poor but at least I’m honest and I have dignity. I prefer to live in Cuba like this than to have a stressful life in Europe. That’s why I returned*” or “*I don’t have much, but what I have, I share*”. I found that some Cubans were aware of this discourse. As Jakubiak (2017, 211) argued in her article on romanticization in voluntourism, the “... employment of romanticizing the Other discourse reflects what numerous volunteer tourism researchers have termed the ‘poor but happy’ trope (Sin 2010) in which material privation is conflated with a rich cultural life”. Hence, I argue that some Cubans consciously romanticized and demeaned the image (that tourists had) about their own lives on their own terms to reinforce reciprocity within relationships with voluntourists.

Likewise, with the focus on experiencing the *real* Cuba and having ‘real’ interactions with Cubans, there was a constant (but superficial) contact with Cubans. I argue that the contact and friendships established with staff members in the camp are part of – what Hollander (1981, 424) called – *techniques of hospitality*, which I discussed earlier on. The highly-planned *reality* and *authenticity* of friendships are part of a romanticized image of Cuban life. Meanwhile, they reduce the chance to experience a less-planned (more *real*?) reality in which, for example, not every Cuban shares the same ideological ideas. Moreover, as Fernández (2000, 28) argued, human solidarity is at the core of Cuba’s national identity and “romanticism of Cuban political culture (is) fostered by José Martí, the founding father of the nation”. Hence, this finding strengthens my argument that Cuban volunteer brigades are a form of state propaganda. Simultaneously, it also feeds the voluntourists’

typical interest in a meaningful engagement with local people which is a romanticized perception of the Other.<sup>89</sup>

#### 4.5.3 The Commodification of Love: *Por Interés*

*“Amor cuerdo, no es amor.”* – José Martí<sup>90</sup>

It has become clear that, in touristic Cuba, intimate relationships are given meaning by the gifts that were given and returned among the partners involved. Therefore, reciprocity helps to establish and maintain the relationship. Intimacy is part of *la lucha* because it was a way to overcome economic difficulties and access necessary goods. The idea of purely romantic love therefore becomes problematized when Cubans and voluntourists get intimately involved. Cubans see, for example, that tourists also bring certain luxury goods as well as a prosperous lifestyle with them to Cuba. This influences not only the needs but also the desires of Cuban people. Cubans want to participate in this lifestyle and the practices it involves by establishing relationships with tourists. Therefore, tensions within Cuban society are created in romantic relationships.

One day, I noticed Leo (Cuban) talking with Sandra (voluntourist) with whom he was flirting. Leo complimented her by saying that his perfume smelled very nice. *“It’s not a perfume, it’s deodorant”*, she said. *“Really? I’ve never smelled a nice deodorant in my life! Actually, we don’t really have good ones in Cuba*

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<sup>89</sup> In earlier work (Rausenberger, 2015b, 14-15) I argued that: “...the difference between tourists and voluntourists is thus primarily that voluntourists are having ‘real’ interactions with local people, and tourists do not. Voluntourists are not just interested in meeting the exotic Other as an object to be viewed, but are rather engaged in having meaningful contact with local people”.

<sup>90</sup> My translation: “Sane love, is not love”.

anyway”, Leo replied. Sandra reacted: “*When I return to Cuba, I’ll bring you one!*”. He smiled at her: “*Preciosa (you’re previous)!*”.

Due to the possession of certain goods, Cubans can acquire increased social mobility in society, thus giving consumption and love a morally ambiguous role. Especially jineteros create social identities through the process of commodity exchange of goods with their *romantic* partners. Such capitalistic approach to romance and love not only addresses materialistic desires, but also creates new desires of self-expression and self-production by consumption. This is what Giddens (1991) called *life politics*: a way to reconfigure relationships in society by manifesting our identity and the realization of a particular self-image as a site of political change. Through a relationship with a tourist, a Cuban can escape the limitations of Cuban socialism, such as economic problems, by applying capitalism. Therefore, I argue that love increasingly becomes commodified, especially within the touristic sphere.

The voluntourist, however, often has completely opposite ideas about the nature of a relationship with a Cuban. Although it was very difficult to talk to voluntourists about their intimate involvement with Cubans, some tourists did talk about their intentionality. Some comments were more pointed towards sexual pleasure:

*“It was nothing serious... It was more for fun.... really happy and nice though.”*

*“Just a quicky (a fast relationship passing by)!”*

*“Whether I had sex with a Cuban? (laughs)... It’s Cuba baby!”*

It can be derived from the narrative of the last quote that this participant had a preconceived (though not well-formulated) idea about Cuba and its people, which suggests that this person perceived



Cubans as highly sexualized Others. Some of my Cuban informants commodified their stereotypical sexualized image. “*Foreigners often fall in love with us (Cubans) because we are caliente (hot) and they know it, they see it, and they feel it. I’m sure that many European women come here to experience that what they miss in Europe, what their men can’t give*”, José argued. Roland (2011, 81) received similar arguments by Cubans and concluded that “Cuban women mobilize and manipulate stereotypes for their own gain, thereby commodifying both themselves and national imagery”.

Moreover, the voluntourists mentioned the temporal character of the relationship. Jakubiak (2017, 212) commented on this type of involvement which occurs in a liminal phase (such as voluntourism), “travel is often a period of time in which guests try on new identities and behaviors with (seemingly) minimal consequences for life back home... It (the relationship) was a product of a liminal time, and as the volunteer vacation is over, so, too, is the romance”. I have indeed witnessed how a voluntourist experimented with intimate relationships with a staff member in the camp and how she reintegrated into her community back home. She returned to her boyfriend at home once she left Cuba. She told me that she had enjoyed the sensual character of the contact while dancing and kissing, but that the Cuban *novio* (boyfriend) did not have the (financial) qualities which she was looking for in a man to build a life together.

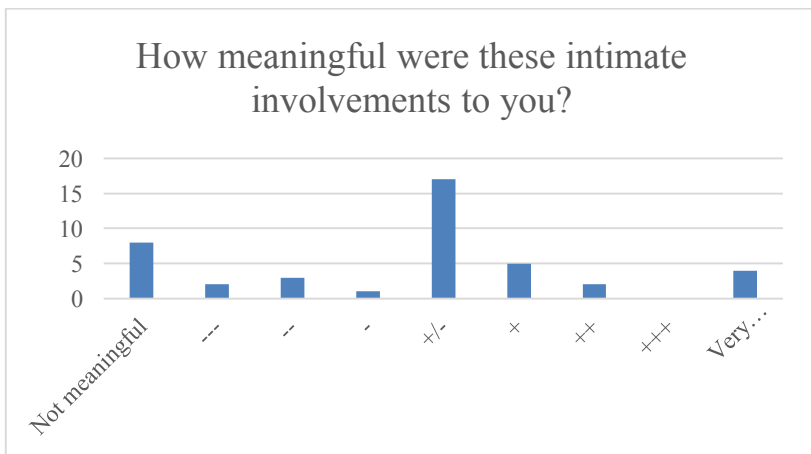
Another voluntourist talked about a more successful romantic experience in Cuba:

*“I wasn’t looking for it, but I happened to find my new love in Cuba. It was very emotional. In fact, the whole brigade was so special... sharing so many things for so many days really brings people together, especially when it comes to like-minded people from different parts of the world. This is even more intriguing.”*

Yet another tourist expressed his frustrations with the interested character of Cubans within the establishment of intimate relationships:

*“Although I had the chance many times, I didn’t because I really felt sometimes like I was a money machine to these Cubans who pretend that they really liked me. I think they liked what was underneath there (pointing to his lower body parts). No, no, not my dick... I mean my wallet.”*

Whereas some voluntourists experienced sexual or romantic interest in Cubans, others felt repelled from intimate involvements because of the economically motivated intention of Cubans in it. Others saw it as purely pleasure motivated. Overall, the results of the questionnaire showed that intimate relationships were experienced very differently, but leaning more towards not meaningful than towards meaningful for the participants (see Figure 14 below).



*Figure 14: Analysis of the meaningfulness of intimate involvements for volunteers*

In the sociological work *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Viviana Zelizer (2005) argued that affection and economic activity are closely connected. Economic resources help to create, sustain and negotiate interpersonal relationships and therefore give meaning to intimate ties between people. The economic dimension therefore sustains the intimate sphere of life. Nevertheless, when relationships become commodified, it can result in a different experience and meaningfulness to the actors involved because both partners have different needs, desires and aspirations in the engagement.

Within the scope of *la lucha*, Cubans might establish relationships with tourists as a tactical strategy to make ends meet. In her book *After Love* on Cuban intimacy, Noelle Stout (2014) wrote that the invasion of interested relationships in Cuba contaminates the idea of desire and authentic love. Hereby, the Cubans' affective network of intimate relationships provides what the state fails to provide: "satisfaction for personal, spiritual, and even material needs", as Fernández (2000, 80) stated it. As a result, there is an increasing tendency in Cuba, and especially in touristic Cuba, to problematize the conception of love as *true* (sincere, real) or *interested* (mainly financially motivated). It is in this regard that moral controversies over *wants* and *needs* rise and that solidarity becomes closely interrelated with intimacy.

Likewise, *relaciones por interés* (interested relationships) can be broadly interpreted as relationships with an ulterior motive, ranging from money to sex to status, a visa to leave the country through marriage and even whitening.<sup>91</sup> So, Fernández (2010, 132) noted: "*interés* is not only for immediate material gains". When the Cubans' interest in the relationship with a tourist is not just for necessity, but for advancement or luxury and consumption, the

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<sup>91</sup> Roland (2011, 115) defines whitening as "the quest to whiten oneself by assimilating to Western (white) behavioral and cultural norms, or to whiten one's offspring by procreating with a lighter complexioned person".

Cuban is considered a *jinetero*. This is the greatest difference between *relaciones por interés* and *jineterismo*. For example, I observed a big difference between Cubans who were interested in meeting tourists because they were *resolviendo* (resolving problems) and Cubans who hung out with tourists because they wanted to take part in a consumerist lifestyle visiting beaches, restaurants and nightclubs or wearing Western-styled clothes given by the tourist they interacted with.

To obtain such *membership* to a global consumer society, and consequently enhance social status, *jineteros* offer, in return for these short-term comforts, a glimpse inside their local culture and operate as a personal cultural broker (and thus not merely as a sexual object engaging in prostitution, as if often stereotypically defined as *jineterismo*).<sup>92</sup> A typical *jinetero* operates as an informal tourist guide who shows the tourist the island, his life, his house and other sights that the tourist would normally not get to see in a touristic setting. Thereby, he mobilizes the resources that he has available: intellectual talks, information about the country, translation of English into Spanish, dancing skills, sexuality and sometimes sex, hospitality, and so on. In fact, as Roland (2011, 82) remarked, *jineterismo* “is one of the rare sectors in today’s Cuba that recognizes the importance of friendliness and customer service”. Hence, *jineteros* give back the experience of the *real* Cuba that

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<sup>92</sup> In this study on *jineterismo*, I did not approach the phenomenon as prostitution. From the anthropological perspective, I argue that it is important to differentiate the performances, motivations, and situational aspects between these two phenomena. Hereby, I followed the approach of Alcazar Campos (2010). Unfortunately, *jineterismo* remains widely stereotyped as ‘hustling for dollars’ or ‘prostitution’ (Fusco, 1998; Whitfield, 2009). Therefore, it was also very hard to study this phenomenon within the context of ethnographic fieldwork: Cubans do not like to talk openly about it.

especially voluntourists are looking for, elaborating on romanticization.

#### 4.5.4 Towards a Political Economy of Love

In this last section on social relationships, love and friendship between Cubans and voluntourists in Cuba, it has become clear that the idea of romantic love and friendship became troubled within the Cuban context of *la lucha*. For jineteros, these notions offer an ideological arena in which they can distinguish themselves by commodifying it. They are special in touristic Cuba because of their interplay with consumption as sentiments, affect and intimacy provide a tactical strategy to advance both the voluntourist as the Cuban's situation. If I can argue that voluntourists use socialist ideals of solidarity and friendship for their own benefits, accordingly Cubans use western ideals of love and friendship for their own benefits. Romanticization is thereby an important imaginary perception of reality for both actors.

I would like to borrow the idea of *the political economy of love* (Cante, 2013) to illustrate that intimacy has become commodified in Cuba. As Cante (2013, 44) argued:

“...first: although love is a moral value, an expression of empathy and altruism, its performance and supply are bounded because the problem of scarcity (material and institutional limitations); second: because love is a form of power (integrative power), which is frequently combined with other powers (of exchange and coercion); third: in the extremes of pure public goods and of privatization (monopolies, positional goods, and clubs) the love dries up.”

It is exactly within this moral economy that jineterismo and voluntourism operate and that the explanation of the

commodification of intimacy and love lies. Such political economy of love is not only used by individuals, but also by the Cuban state with the establishment of a Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). Even the government has turned human relationship into a commodity to – paradoxically – promote socialism and include its political values, thanks to the consumption of a romanticized image of friendship and solidarity. The experience and mobilization of affect therefore has a significant influence on both the individual and the social in touristic Cuba whereby *interés* works at different levels. With romance and romanticization in Cuban voluntourism relying heavily upon emotional involvement, the emotional influences the instrumental character of *interested* relationships in Cuba.

## 5. CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING REMARKS

### 5.1 Conclusion

This anthropological research project aimed to explore the main research question: *‘What is the relationship between voluntourist’s philanthropic aspirations and the socio-economic phenomenon of jineterismo in Cuba?’* as the fundamental purpose by using a case study of a volunteer brigade in Cuba. Whereas voluntourists engage in this type of travel in search for authenticity in their capitalistic existence, jineteros overwhelmingly seek further incorporation into capitalism and a way out of pressure to conform in the Cuban socialist society.

Despite the reverse interests in these encounters, I argue that both voluntourists and jineteros share an interest in cross-cultural experiences and making friends from afar. Hence, to understand this paradoxical interrelatedness, this thesis studied the difference in meaning for both actors. This is precisely the task of anthropological studies.

The somewhat provocative title of this thesis *‘Why don’t you give me some love?’* can be interpreted in many ways: why do voluntourists (not) give what they (can) give? Why do voluntourists (not) love who they (can) love? Why do Cubans (not) give what they (can) give? Why do Cubans (not) love who they (can) love? These concluding notes aim to answer these questions.

In the first section (1) on the political economy of voluntourism and solidarity work, it became clear that the political effort of solidarity through voluntourism is a sentimental response to (pro-socialist) development. It talked about voluntourists’ desire for *the real Cuba*, fight for justice and the moral underpinnings of help, consciousness and guilt. Hereby, it became clear that power

dynamics were at play within the encounters between voluntourists and Cubans.

I argued that voluntourism in Cuba is not just about helping or giving, guilt-conscious feelings and compassion towards ‘impoverished communities’, but rather to bring Cuba’s reality and justice to the world. In fact, voluntourists in Cuba often rejected the ideas of bringing modernization, progress and economic (capitalist) development to Cuba. Rather, they supported the pre-existing way of socialist life in Cuba and promoted these ideals in the world.

The section concluded that the relationship between voluntourism and political solidarity relies on affective investment and the mobilization of affect within the touristic sphere. The study also found that Cuban politics draw heavily on the role that affect and emotions play in voluntourism, and that these are incorporated as a strategy to promote the national ideology. In other words, the state operates as a *jinetero*: exploiting its political system to attract tourists while paradoxically losing its political integrity by moving towards tourism as a capitalist source of income for the island.

The second section (2) dealt with the sentimental politics behind reciprocity in voluntouristic relationships. Hereby, attention was paid to philanthropic gift-giving and reciprocity between voluntourists and *jineteros* while paying attention to the everyday struggle in Cuba, called *la lucha*, to gain anthropological understanding of these dynamics. Finally, it nuanced these practices through an anthropological analysis of the actors’ double moral.

Likewise, this section showed that gift-giving is a form of social solidarity between people which creates, marks and sustains social bonds. However, it can also have negative consequences as it is a vehicle to exercise power. Therefore, voluntourism cannot be considered a mere act of charity through ‘the gift of voluntary work’.



Rather, it is a way for voluntourists (as givers) to work on their self-development and to feel *useful* in the world.

Meanwhile, jineteros (as receivers) return the relationship with a glimpse in their local culture, companionship and the courtesy of friendship that voluntourists desire. In return, they enhance their social status by accessing short-term comforts and gifts (or sometimes even long-term benefits such as an invitation abroad).

Even the government operates in the cycling gift system by giving deepened knowledge about *the real Cuba* and the courtesy of membership in ICAP while, its gift is returned when the voluntourist becomes an ‘ambassador for the Cuban cause’ who will promote socialism in the world. Overall, this section showed that reciprocity in touristic encounters provides a privileged platform for these actors where various forms of intimacy (friendship, romance and love) can be acted out.

Therefore, this section shed light on the dynamics of solidarity and individualism at the same time. It also showed that there is a strong contradiction between jineterismo – which contests the ideals of the socialist regime by struggling with political and economic limitations – and voluntourism – which romanticizes the socio-political and economic situation in Cuba.

I argued that both the voluntourists’ as the jineteros’ behavior was troubled because, on the one hand, voluntourists are traditionally seen as wealthy givers who travel to help developing impoverished parts in the world, while on the other hand, they also desire the simplicity of poorer communities through – what I called – romanticization of peoples and places. Cubans also experience a moral ambiguity as they value their national socialist ideology but also struggle to overcome economic difficulties in ways that are at odds with the political moral.

Ultimately, the third section (3) on romantic relationships, love and friendship moved beyond the borders of compassion. It explored the meaning given to the established relationships between voluntourists and Cubans while trying to grasp what constitutes love and friendship for both actors. This research project showed that friendships were approached and experienced very dissimilar by voluntourists and Cubans, especially in relation to reciprocity.

For a Cuban, the friend who gives the most is perceived as the one who loves you most. The circulation of objects, solidarity and gifts among friends thus become meaningful, not only because of their economic sake but also because of their social purpose. I illustrated this argument by elaborating on *sociolismo*, the use of intimate networks as a part of *la lucha* in Cuba.

Whereas *jineteros* value friendship because the affective can forge economic support, voluntourists valorization of friendships with Cubans can be explained by the anthropological theory on *communitas* as they occur in a liminal phase of their existence. *Jineteros* tend to engage in relationships with voluntourists *por interés* and are given meaning by the material value or rising opportunities coming along with the engagement while, for voluntourists, relationships occur in a liminal and temporary phase.

Another explanation was found in the link with the widespread romanticization of people within relationships between voluntourists and Cubans. The relationship between the sentimental politics of *jineterismo* and voluntourism in Cuba can precisely be found in the finding that some *jineteros* played on romance and romanticization.

When the image that voluntourists have about a Cuban's life is consciously romanticized and demeaned on the Cuban's terms to reinforce reciprocity with voluntourists, the underlying motivators of these phenomena are reinforced. Especially within Cuban voluntourism, the highly-planned reality and staged authenticity of

friendship become a conscious part of a romanticized image of Cuban life by both the government and jineteros.

Meanwhile, the jinetero gives back the experience of *the real Cuba* and a meaningful engagement with local people which voluntourists typically are looking for, while elaborating on a romanticized perception of the Other. Such romanticization reinforces the interactions between the two phenomena. Therefore, the idea of friendship, romance and love become problematized when jineteros – with their ‘capitalist’ approach on intimacy – and voluntourists – with their socialist approach on solidarity – meet each other.

At the place where the *interests* of the voluntourist and the *interés* of the jinetero meet, the intimate becomes commodified into a ‘political economy of love’. This is the intimate relationship between the sentimental politics of jineterismo and voluntourism. So, to answer the title of this thesis rhetorically: why wouldn’t they give each other some love?!

## **5.2 Relevance for Anthropology**

With this thesis belonging in the sub-discipline of the Anthropology of Tourism, as defined by Graburn (1983, 26) as “the study of tourism in terms of the social, economic, and cultural background of the tourists, including the efforts of the industry situated within the tourists’ societies to effect tourist behavior”. I argue that it constitutes a relatively under-researched and interesting point of view on volunteer tourism in the form of solidarity brigades, especially because it makes the underexplored connection between voluntourism and intimate relationships with the volountoured.

This thesis has presented a broader analytical view on the topics of jineterismo and voluntourism in relationship to solidarity (the political), intimate relationships (the social) and philanthropic gift-

giving (the economic). As tourists and jineteros as a considerable proportion of people in Cuban society, the nature of their interactions and their impacts are ever evolving over time, it is relevant within the discipline of Social and Cultural Anthropology.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

In this conclusion, I also wish to pay attention to several unforeseen limitations that have occurred during the ethnographic fieldwork. First, as I already pointed out in my reflexive and ethical considerations, my position as a researcher in the field has influenced this anthropological project tremendously. As a female researcher, it was far easier to talk to Cuban males as they often approached me spontaneously.

Secondly, my relationship with Angél has been a very rich experience which has provided me insightful perspectives on jineterismo, but it also means that my data might be colored by this relationship. Although I did not plan to engage in such situation, it happened. I am therefore sure that if another anthropologist would have conducted this research, other results would have been collected for certain parts.

As Powdermaker (1966, 290) argued: “The choice of close friends in the field depends on subtle and often intangible personality qualities which underlie friendships anywhere. The intimate inside view which a field worker receives from his close friends must therefore differ somewhat from what another anthropologist would get from different types of intimates in the same field situation”. The question can therefore be raised whether each ethnographic project has not different results when conducted by a different ethnographer.

Likewise, new problems occurred once I was in Cuba. As I did present myself as a voluntourist myself in the field – without having a research visa – I could not count on governmental cooperation as

much as I hoped. I did not expect sensitive topics as *jineterismo* to be this difficult to research: often when I talked to Cuban staff members in the field, they refused to talk about their intimate relationships with tourists as their employer, the Cuban government, refused them by contract to engage in this. Therefore, they often denied such personal experiences or kept it a secret. Some sincerely told me that they simply could not talk about it because of the strict control by state security agents walking around in the camp. As a result, speaking about *jineterismo* within the setting of a pro-socialist camp was not done: this phenomenon is a violation of the revolutionary ideals.

Moreover, the government limits the contact between Cubans and tourists by creating an artificial setting in which the employed Cubans need to follow a strict script. Again, this limited the possibility to interview them openly about their opinion on political topics and intimate relationships with tourists. Because I only managed to gain enough trust of very few Cuban staff members who were willing to take the risk to engage in my research project, there is a large unbalance of Cuban informants and voluntourists.

Moreover, as I explained in the methodological chapter, I opted for a post-tour questionnaire as there was not enough time to conduct sufficient interviews with participants during the volunteer program. Luckily, this appeared to great solution for timing problems and resulted in a relatively quantitative amount of qualitative data. However, it was again not possible to send out a questionnaire to Cubans because of their strict state control and their lack of connectivity to the internet.

Lastly, one of the greatest limitations in this research project was probably the choice to choose for the phenomenon *jineterismo* as it is a highly essentializing term to label many Cuban people as prostitutes or hustlers. Starting from this categorization increasingly limited me to approach the touristic scene without prejudices. To

avoid further *essentialization*, I decided not to talk much about the heavily connoted word *jineterismo* while I was in Cuba. I also decided not to use the word *jineterismo* in the questionnaire because of this reason. Ultimately, if I would do this research project over again, I would not use the word *jineterismo* but look for a more nuanced approach towards this research project. After all, as I have tried to make clear, *jineterismo* is considered a justified way of love for Cubans which should be respected.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Further Research**

Because of the limitations mentioned above, I would argue for further research that aims to construct a new terminology within this context of *jineterismo* in the first place. Moreover, I encourage further researchers to reframe ethnographic projects like this within the constraints of the Cuban government, because it might offer new insights to the research if Cuban staff workers in the volunteer brigade are able to talk more democratically about their experience.

As Powdermaker (1966, 286) noted: “Like everything else, anthropology grows, changes, and develops. New problems appear and new techniques are developed”. Admitting these limitations and failures in my research does not mean that this thesis has not been a useful and valuable contribution to the anthropological literature. In contrary, it has created new questions and problems that invite fellow anthropologists who are interested in conducting research on voluntourism and/or *jineterismo* in Cuba.

Further anthropological research must be encouraged to show how voluntourists and Cubans confront the limitations of the revolutionary ideals in Cuba. Although this research project never aimed to study people’s viewpoint and engagement with Cuban politics, it appeared to be way more political than anticipated. However, it now seems impossible to study Cuban voluntourism in relation to *jineterismo* without engaging that much in an intent to

understand the revolutionary ideology and socialist theory and practices.

Ultimately, it must not be forgotten that Cuban volunteer brigades are under-researched and deserve more academic attention within the anthropological discipline as they offer a rich environment to study cross-national people-to-people interactions and international solidarity. Especially with Cuban society standing at the starting blocks of a new political era, this thesis is just a starting point to encourage more, deepened and nuanced anthropological studies on how people – both tourists and Cubans – engage across these changes in Cuba.

## **Afterword: Leaving the Field**

There is an increasing tendency towards commitment to reciprocal relationships in the field as an ethical requirement of ethnographic fieldwork, Robben & Sluka (2014, 22) argued. This involves that the researcher gives something back to his participants to show mutual respect and as an appreciation for their collaboration. Such research reciprocity can take place in various forms, ranging from paying participants to simply offering refreshments.

As I mentioned throughout the thesis, I often invited my informants for dinners and drinks at the bar or near the beach. In some cases, I also functioned as an intermediary in creating opportunities for them to earn money, such as arranging taxi drives. Another instance of reciprocity was a service I did for Maria, one of the staff members in the camp. When she heard that I was in Santiago de Cuba, she called me to ask whether I could carry some luggage of her from that side of the island to Havana. Such acts were my way of *giving back* to my informants, because I never used monetary payments to talk to research participants.

Although my official fieldwork period in Cuba ended by the end of August 2016, I returned to the island several times in the following months. Each time, I called my Cuban informants and tried to meet them again to maintain our friendship. Angél kept driving me from and to the airport each time I visited the island, and I always gave him 10 CUC for the ride: much cheaper for me than an official taxi, and much money for him knowing that his official monthly wage was only 30 CUC. I also visited the offices of ICAP in Havana several times to greet the staff members and to show my respect and gratitude.

In Belgium, I became a member of the ICS solidarity movement to offer financial and moral support to their solidarity work for Cuba and to give more weight to their views and requirements towards



Belgian and European governments in respect to foreign relations with Cuba. I participated in some activities which they organized, such a New Year's reception and an Easter brunch in Brussels, and I also supported the movement by buying their publications and sponsored materials. Whenever I encountered interesting news or publications with respect to Cuban society, I forwarded it to Isabelle, chairwoman of ICS. I also sent her my scholarly papers on Cuba.

With the volunteers, I mostly remained in contact after the volunteer brigade through a Facebook group *Brigada Europea José Martí Cuba 2016* which I created immediately after the program. The group counted 93 members at the time of writing and is still being actively used by the brigadistas to share thoughts and ideas on Cuban news and topics in a virtual way. The group also served as a tool to share pictures and videos that we captured during the program. Nevertheless, the geographical distance between participants led to a certain disengagement after leaving Cuba. Although many friendships and romances between volunteers and Cubans emerged during the program, there were only few that lasted.

Regarding the development of my relationship with Angél, I often struggled with my ethical position. After the brigade finished, I promised to help him to earn money so that we could travel around together without me ending up paying everything (which I found unethically correct). As Angél had a car, I arranged several airport transfer services for the volunteers that were leaving the country. Although Angél managed to earn a decent amount of money with these services, it was not enough to result in a financially equal relationship between us and I always ended up paying most. We soon started to have fights. Moreover, Angél did not like me to hang out with other Cubans because he was scared to lose me to another man. The lack of financial stability, future perspectives and trust led to an abrupt end of our relationship in August 2016. Fortunately, we managed to remain friends.

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## 7. Attachments

### 7.1 Promotion Flyer for the Brigade by ICS



Ga mee naar Cuba! 

vrijwilligerswerk ★ Che Guevara  
salsa ★ Havana ★ debatten ★ strand  
sport ★ natuur ★ politiek ★ ...

**4-26 JULI**

▶▶ Richtprijs **850 EUR**  
Vervoer ter plaatste, logement, meeste  
maaltijden, inkomtickets musea ed.,  
reisbegeleider, reisvoorbereiding  
! vliegticket niet inbegrepen !



 ICS-Iniciativa-Cuba-Socilista  
 ics\_cubanismo  
 ics@cubanismo.net  
**www.cubanismo.net**

## 7.2 Logo on T-shirts of the Belgian Voluntourists



Copyright Elise Vandepiancke

### 7.3 Articles on the Brigade in Cuban Media



Brigadistas from Russia, Spain, Greece, Portugal, France, and Belgium expressed their support for the Cuban Revolution.  
*Photo: Karoly Emerson, ICAP (Full article: Granma, 2016)*

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A WEEKLY ON CUBA AND LATIN AMERICAN AFFAIRS | JULY 22 2016 | ENGLISH EDITION

## European brigadistas ratify solidarity with the Cuban Revolution

Nuria Barbosa Ledín  
Photos: Károly Emerson/ICAP

• BRAVING the heat, around 100 European friends from 14 countries visited the Caribbean island July 5-22 as part of the 40th José Martí Solidarity Brigade, here to offer their individual efforts, above all, to productive activities. Based at the Julio Antonio Mella International Camp, located in the municipality of Camito, Artemisa province, the brigadistas — from Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, the UK, Switzerland, Turkey and Greece — undertook a varied program of activities, including meeting members of the community and participating in agricultural tasks, conferences on Cuba's reality, as well as cultural and sporting initiatives.

Speaking to *Grianna* International Julie Rausenberger, a Social and Cultural Anthropology student from Belgium, expressed her desire to raise young peoples' interest in international solidarity activism. This is the 27 year old's first trip to Cuba, traveling with her 19 year old cousin Tara Rausenberger, a telecommunications professional, and friend Joni Andries, studying event management.

"In the brigade they have explained the damage caused by the perennial economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on the Cuban people by the United States for over 60 years; the contributions to humanity by independence leader José Martí and heroic guerrilla Ernesto Che Guevara; as well as the construction of a non-capitalist social model," stated Rausenberger. Lazaros Kikidis from Greece, who has traveled to Cuba with the brigade on two previous occasions, noted his admiration for the progress achieved by the island through the updating of its economic model proposed in the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, held in 2010.

He highlighted that the Cuban people offer the world daily examples of how to fight for sovereignty and against the injustices of the exploitative capitalist system.

Kikidis noted that his country is currently suffering a severe economic crisis caused by the harsh austerity measures imposed by the so-called Troika — composed of the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund.

He criticized the ongoing austerity policies, which aim to protect big business at the expense of the working class — affected by a rise in unemployment, wage reductions, an increase in the cost of living, and undermining hopes of building a stable society.

"We are in the streets fighting for our social gains," he stated.

Kikidis, a teacher, spoke about all the activities carried out to secure the release of the Cuban Five, who were unjustly imprisoned in the United States for over 16 years, noting his joy at the news of their release on December 17, 2014.

Likewise, Maria Concepción Perera from Portugal, described the large international campaign undertaken,



Julie Rausenberger from Belgium hopes to contribute to Cuba's social development by participating in voluntary work.



Lazaros Kikidis from Greece, visiting Cuba for the second time, praises the advances made by the island in its economic development.



Maria Concepción Perera from Portugal participates in activities organized by the Portugal-Cuba Friendship Association and is a firm defender of the island's social project.



Manuel Morales Reyes from Spain, enjoys staying at the Julio Antonio Mella International Camp where he is able to speak with people from different nations.



Françoise McCavana from France, speaks to the members of the brigade about the mass protests taking place against a labor reform passed by the French President.



Russian student Ivan Alexandrevich Medvedev highlights the role of the Cuban people in their struggle against imperialism.

which included the creation of solidarity committees for the Freedom of the Cuban Five in around 100 countries. She noted that to date, these groups continue to work to refute misleading media depictions of Cuba's reality.

"I am a member of the Portugal-Cuba Friendship Association," noted Perera who has visited the island with the brigade 12 times.

She noted that the Association organizes numerous activities to spread the truth about Cuba and disseminate the messages of the Revolution and remains by its leadership.

The group also celebrates historic dates, organizes expositions, and conferences on various topics related to Cuban socialism, as well as trips to the Caribbean nation.

Manuel Morales Reyes, stated that he is a member of the Hispano-Cuban Association in Andriana, and is on his third trip to the island with the brigade.

"Every time I visit the island I see greater advances in its economic and social development. I learn about Cuban culture and speak with people and I am very fond of Cubans. I want to contribute in some way to the people's struggle. I feel spiritually enriched when I work with students and young workers," noted the agricultural worker from the Montalvan region in Córdoba.

Morales Reyes also highlighted that he enjoys the opportunity to speak with people from different nations on the brigade, with whom he talks at length about the situation in Europe, strengthening their conviction to struggle for a better society on the so-called Old Continent.

For Morales the different languages are not a barrier, as there is always someone on hand to help translate. "The most important thing is to share our experiences of the struggle for social change."

This sentiment is shared by Françoise McCavana from France, who explained to the members of the brigade about the mass protests taking place in different cities across the country demanding that a labor reform approved by the French President be revoked.

According to McCavana, the measure could mean greater unemployment, a loss of historic gains achieved by the working class, greater exploitation of workers, and violations of labor rights. The social worker based in the city of Marseille highlighted that this is her first trip to Cuba, where she is learning about the construction of socialism, describing the Cuban revolution as a great example for the world.

Meanwhile, Russian student Ivan Alexandrevich Medvedev expressed compassion for the Cuban people, who have thwarted the United States' annexationist and colonial provocations in the interest of maintaining their national sovereignty.

He also described Cuba's long history of resistance in the struggle against global imperialism — proof that the capitalist system and major world powers can be defeated, he said. •



## 7.4 Detailed Program of the Volunteer Brigade

### SABADO Y DOMINGO 3 DE JULIO

Reclutamiento de las delegaciones en el CIJAM.

Alajamenco.

#### LUNES 4 DE JULIO

07:30 hrs. De pie y desayuno.

09:00 hrs. Ofrenda floral en el Monumento 3 Julio, A. Mella. Al concluir, sembla de un árbol en el Bosque Memorial José Martí con los brigadistas y embajadores del Campesino.

10:00 hrs. Acto oficial de Bienvenida.

Reunión General de Información.

12:00 hrs. Reuniones de información por países.

18:00 hrs. Primera reunión del Comité Coordinador para

19:00 hrs. Cena.

Jefes de Delegaciones.

20:30 hrs. Actividad Cultural de bienvenida en el Campesino.

#### MARTES 5 DE JULIO

05:45 hrs. De pie. Desayuno.

06:45 hrs. Matutino.

07:00 hrs. Salida hacia las labores productivas.

11:00 hrs. Regreso al Campesino.

12:00 hrs. Almuerzo.

14:00 hrs. Salida para Ciudad de la Habana. Ofrenda floral en el Monumento a José Martí del Memorial José Martí en la Plaza de la Revolución. Palabras de bienvenida.

Vista al Monumento.

16:00-18:30 hrs. Tiempo libre en el Centro Histórico de la Ciudad.

18:30 hrs. Salida hacia la Casa de la Amistad desde el Monumento de la Revolución.

19:00 hrs. Cena en la Casa de la Amistad.

22:30 hrs. Regreso al CIJAM.

#### MIERCOLES 6 DE JULIO

07:00 hrs. De pie. Desayuno.

08:30 hrs. Salida hacia Artemisa.

09:00 hrs. Vista al Complejo Memorial de los Mártires y Héroes de Artemisa.

10:00 hrs. Recorrido en grupos por lugares de interés de la Provincia.

- Vista a un proyecto comunitario.

- Visita a una cooperativa.

12:30 hrs. Almuerzo.

15:00 hrs. Conferencia: "Proceso de normalización de las relaciones entre los EREJUD y Cuba. Perspectiva y Desafíos."

19:00 hrs. Cena.

20:30 hrs. Clases de baile.

Venta de opcional por AMISTUR (Habana Café).

### JUEVES 7 DE JULIO

05:45 hrs. De pie. Desayuno.

06:45 hrs. Matutino.

07:00 hrs. Salida hacia las labores productivas.

11:00 hrs. Regreso al Campesino.

12:00 hrs. Almuerzo.

15:00 hrs. Conferencia: "Economía cubana. La actualización del modelo económico cubano."

19:00 hrs. Cena.

20:00 hrs. Noche cubana en el CIJAM.

### VIERNES 8 DE JULIO

05:45 hrs. De pie. Desayuno.

06:45 hrs. Matutino.

07:00 hrs. Salida hacia las labores productivas.

11:00 hrs. Regreso al Campesino.

12:00 hrs. Almuerzo.

15:00 hrs. Conferencia: "La democracia y los derechos humanos en Cuba. Subversión vs. Soberanía."

19:00 hrs. Cena.

20:30 hrs. Presentación del grupo Nueva Generación.

### SABADO 9 DE JULIO

07:00 hrs. De pie y desayuno

08:00 hrs. Inscripción para la Carrera de la Amistad desde Garrayabal hasta el CIJAM.

08:30 hrs. Salida de los participantes en omnibus hacia Garrayabal.

10:00 hrs. Inicio de la Carrera de la Amistad. Premiación en el CIJAM por parte de grupos del deporte cubano.

11:00 hrs. Almuerzo con charlas del deporte cubano.

12:30 hrs. Regreso al Campesino.

15:00 hrs. Actividad cultural con grupo de niños y jóvenes de Artemisa.

19:00 hrs. Cena en el Campesino.

20:30 hrs. Clases de baile.

Venta de opcional por AMISTUR (Caharet Parisien)

### DOMINGO 10 DE JULIO

07:00 hrs. De pie. Desayuno.

08:30 hrs. Salida hacia la Playa de Tarara.

12:30 hrs. Almuerzo en el lugar.

16:00 hrs. Regreso al CIJAM.

18:30 hrs. Segunda reunión del Comité Coordinador para

Jefes de Delegaciones.

19:00 hrs. Cena.

20:00 hrs. Proyección de un filme cubano.

### LUNES 11 DE JULIO

05:45 hrs. De pie. Desayuno.

06:45 hrs. Matutino

07:00 hrs. Salida para las labores productivas.

11:00 hrs. Regreso al campesino

12:00 hrs. Almuerzo

15:00 hrs. Presentación de documental sobre misión médica cubana contra el Ébola en África Occidental.

18:30 hrs. Interacción con médicos internacionlistas cubanos. La cooperación internacional de Cuba con otros países del mundo.

19:00 hrs. Recreación

17:30 hrs. Interacción amistosa entre las brigadas Juan Rius Rivera de Puerto Rico y José Martí de Europa.

18:30 hrs. Cena

21:00 hrs. Participación en la actividad cultural de bienvenida de la Brigada Juan Rius Rivera de Puerto Rico.

### MARTES 12 DE JULIO.

05:45 hrs. De pie. Desayuno.

06:45 hrs. Matutino.

07:00 hrs. Salida hacia las labores productivas.

11:00 hrs. Regreso al Campesino.

12:30 hrs. Almuerzo.

15:00 hrs. Interacción/Diálogo informales con los miembros de la delegación cubana sobre las Conferencias

recibidas.

20:00 hrs. Cena.

### MIERCOLES 13 DE JULIO

05:45 hrs. Matutino.

07:00 hrs. Salida hacia las labores productivas. Presencia de representantes UJC y de las organizaciones estudiantiles de Puerto RICO y del Municipio Camino.

14:00 hrs. Regreso al Campesino.

12:30 hrs. Almuerzo.

15:00 hrs. Interacción con las organizaciones políticas y deportivas de Cuba CTC, PNC y FEEM.

19:00 hrs. Cena.

20:30 hrs. Campesino colorido. Foguea de la Amistad.

### JUEVES 14 DE JULIO

06:30 hrs. De pie. Desayuno

07:00 hrs. Salida para la Habana.

08:30 hrs. Vista en grupos.

- Grupo 1. Hospital Psiquiátrico de La Habana Municipio Boyeros.

- Grupo 2. Proyecto sociocultural en el Calvario.

- Grupo 3. Centro psicopedagógico La Castellana.

12:00 hrs. Almuerzo en restaurante local.

14:30 hrs. Vista al Museo de la Revolución.

Recorrido de la senda libre en la ciudad.

Recorrido al CIJAM desde el Museo de la Revolución.

18:00 hrs. Regreso al Campesino con venta de opcional con para los brigadistas que no van a la opción.

20:00 hrs. Cena en el CIJAM.

Noche libre. Música grabada.

Venta de Opcional por AMISTUR (recorrido de ciudad - Cerecuna del Cañonazo de las 9).

**VIERNES 15 DE JULIO**

05:45 hrs. De pe. Desayuno

06:45 hrs. Matutino.

07:00 hrs. Salida hacia las labores productivas.

10:30 hrs. Regreso al campamento. Remoción evaluación resultados de producción.

12:30 hrs. Almuerzo.

15:00 hrs. Encuentro con combatientes internacionlistas cubanos. Proyección de la película Karagamba.

18:00 hrs. Remoción de información con toda la Brigada para explicar el programa en Provincia.

19:00 hrs. Cena.

Noche libre.

**PROGRAMA EN VILLA CLARA**

**SABADO 16 DE JULIO**

05:30 hrs. De pe. Desayuno.

06:30 hrs. Salida para Santa Clara.

11:30 hrs. Reclutamiento por Delegada y funcionarios del ICAP en el Memorial Ernesto Che Guevara.

Vista al Memorial del Che y al monumento a la acción con-  
tra el Tren Blindado.

13:00 hrs. Almuerzo en Santa Clara.

15:00 hrs. Salida para el hotel Huanabania.

16:00 hrs. Reclutamiento en el hotel.

19:00 hrs. Cena en el hotel.

Noche: Actividades opcionales en el hotel.

**DOMINGO 17 DE JULIO**

08:00 hrs. Desayuno.

09:00 hrs. Vire en barco por el Lago Huanabania.

12:00 hrs. Almuerzo en restaurante campesino Río Negro.

16:00 hrs. Regreso al hotel Huanabania.

19:00 hrs. Cena en el hotel.

Noche: Actividades opcionales en el hotel.

**LUNES 18 DE JULIO**

07:00 hrs. Desayuno.

09:00 hrs. Salida hacia el Consejo Popular de Jibara. Información sobre el plan de desarrollo de la montaña, demografía y turismo.

Vistas al hospital rural; centro de producción de medicinas a partir de plantas medicinales y su expendio en la Farmacia; Centro Universitario; Casas de Cultura.

12:00 hrs. Almuerzo en el hotel.

14:00 hrs. Tarde libre en el hotel.

19:00 hrs. Cena en el hotel.

Noche: Actividades opcionales en el hotel.

**MARTES 19 DE JULIO**

07:00 hrs. Desayuno.

08:30 hrs. Salida hacia Manzanera.

09:00 hrs. Vista a la Fábrica de Jabones, a un policultivo y encuentro en la Casa de Cultura con aficionados.

12:00 hrs. Regreso al Hotel Huanabania. A la llegada, almuerzo.

14:00 hrs. Vista al Grupo de Teatro Ezequiel, institución cultural emblemática de nuestro país.

16:00 hrs. Regreso al hotel.

19:00 hrs. Cena en el hotel.

20:30 hrs. Encuentro con los CDR en la comunidad La Campesina.

**MÉRCOLES 20 DE JULIO**

07:30 hrs. De pe y Desayuno.

08:00 hrs. Tiempo libre a disposición en el hotel.

11:30 hrs. Almuerzo en el hotel. Farianga de habilitaciones.

13:30 hrs. Salida del hotel.

19:00 hrs. Arribo al CIJAM.

20:00 hrs. Cena en el CIJAM.

21:00 hrs. Actividades recreativas. Competencia de baile por pares.

**JUEVES 21 DE JULIO**

08:00 hrs. De pe. Desayuno.

Maratón Libre. Venta de Opcionales por AMISTUR.

12:00 hrs. Almuerzo para los brigadistas que estén en el CIJAM.

17:30 hrs. Preparación de la Noche Europea.

18:00 hrs. Cena.

21:00 hrs. Noche Cultural Europea.

**VIERNES 22 DE JULIO**

07:30 hrs. De pe. Desayuno.

09:00 hrs. Remoción de evaluación por países.

10:30 hrs. Acto oficial de Clausura de la Brigada. Lectura de la Declaración Final.

12:00 hrs. Almuerzo.

14:30 hrs. Remoción final del Comité Coordinador para fines de delegaciones.

17:00 hrs. Tiempo libre a disposición en el CIJAM.

18:00 hrs. Cena.

21:00 hrs. Actividad cultural de despedida.

**SÁBADO 23 DE JULIO**

08:00 hrs. De pe y desayuno.

10:30 hrs. Salida hacia La Habana para los amigos que permanecen en Cuba.

Salidas hacia el aeropuerto para el regreso de las delegaciones a sus países.

**PROGRAMA DE ACTIVIDADES**

**BRIGADA EUROPEA**

**JOSÉ MARTÍ**

Del 4 AL 22 DE JULIO DE 2016



AMISTUR CIJAM S.S.A.



## 7.5 Post-Tour Questionnaire

KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT  
**LEUVEN**

### Tourism, Solidarity, Gifts, Friendship & Intimacy in Cuba

#### 1. Welcome to My Survey

Dear brigadist,

My name is Julie Rausenberger. I am a 24-years old Master student in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Leuven in Belgium. I have participated in the July 2016 solidarity brigade of ICAP in Cuba together with you as I am writing my thesis about volunteer tourism, solidarity, friendship and intimate encounters between tourists and Cubans.

Therefore, I hope you are willing to take 15 minutes to answer this questionnaire. The analysis of all research data will be anonymous to guarantee your privacy. Of course, I would be happy to provide you more information, or send you a digital copy of my thesis once it is finished.

Feel free to contact me: [julierausenberger@gmail.com](mailto:julierausenberger@gmail.com) or find me on Facebook.

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is important!

All the best,  
Julie

## 2. TOURISM

1 What was your motivation to join the brigade?

	Not important		+/-		Very important
Social responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Political interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educational aspect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vacation / Holiday	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work / Profession	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Price / Value for money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

See the real/different Cuba	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoid (all-inclusive) hotel resorts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make new friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

2 Do you support Cuba's ideology / socialist political system?

- Yes
- No
- Partially

Please explain why:

3 Would you categorize this brigade as a form 'volunteer tourism'?

- Yes
- No
- Partially

Please explain why:

4 Do you feel satisfied with the brigade in general, and the volunteer work you did?

Not satisfied										Very satisfied
										

Please explain why:

5 Did the image you have about Cuba change by participating in this brigade?

- Yes
- No
- Partially

Please explain why:

### 3.SOLIDARITY

6 Are you part of an organisation supporting solidarity with Cuba at home?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give the name of the organization:

7 You have participated in a 'solidarity brigade'. What does this solidarity mean to you?  
How did you experience solidarity during the brigade?

8 How important is it, according to your opinion, to show solidarity with Cuba?

Not important at all												Very important
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

Please explain why:

9 How can brigadists best 'help' Cubans, according to your opinion?

10 What have you personally done to 'help' Cuba?

11 Do you feel like your contribution has been helpful for Cuba?

Not helpful Very helpful

Please explain why:

12 Will you continue to be solidair with Cuba after your participation in the brigade?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Please explain how:

## 4.GIFTS

13 Did you give any gifts to Cubans during your stay in Cuba?

- Yes
- No

In case you gave something, can you describe what you gave (e.g. presents / money / food / clothes / products / care / help / ...) and why?

14 Which comes closer to your opinion?

- Cubans asked me to give them something.
- I gave something to Cubans without them asking for it.
- Other (please specify):

15 Did you receive any gifts from Cubans during your stay in Cuba?

- Yes
- No

In case you received something, can you describe what you received (e.g. presents / money / food / clothes / products / care / help / ...) and why?

16 How meaningful do you feel these gifts were?

Not meaningful Very meaningful

Please specify why:

## 5.FRIENDSHIP

17 Did you make friends with Cuban people during your staying in Cuba?

- Yes  
 No  
 Other (please specify)

18 How would you describe these friendships?

	Disagree	+/-	Agree
Real	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Equal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reliable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Giving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Caring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Warm-hearted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Like-minded	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

19 How meaningful do you feel these friendships are?

Not meaningful								Very meaningful
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please specify why:



- 20 The brigade you participated in, was organized by ICAP (The Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples). What do you think they mean with this 'friendship'?

## 6.INTIMACY

- 21 Have you been intimately involved with someone in Cuba?

- Yes, with a local staff member
- Yes, with a Cuban I met outside the brigade
- Yes, with my partner that I traveled to Cuba with
- Yes, with a brigadist
- Yes, with a tourist I met outside the brigade
- No
- Other (please specify)

- 22 Have you heard of other brigadists getting intimately involved in Cuba?

- Yes, with local staff members
- Yes, with Cubans they met outside the brigade
- Yes, with their partner they traveled to Cuba with
- Yes, with brigadists
- Yes, with tourists outside the brigade
- No
- Other (please specify)

23 How meaningful do you feel these intimate involvements are?

Not meaningful Very meaningful

Please specify why:

## 7. GENERAL INFORMATION

24 What is your age?

25 What is your gender?

- Female  
 Male

26 In what country do you live?

27 What is your employment status?

28 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

29 What is your current relationship status?

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30 How did you travel to Cuba?

- I joined a group from my country
- I traveled with my partner / friend(s) / family member(s)
- I joined the brigade by myself
- Other (please specify)

31 How many times have you traveled to Cuba?

32 How many times have you participated in an ICAP brigade?

33 Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns related to these topics (tourism, solidarity, gifts, friendship, and intimacy)?

## 8. THE END



- 34 If you would like to share more thoughts about these themes, please leave your e-mail address here. You will be contacted for more information. Note that all data will be used anonymously.

## **7.6 Final Statement of the Volunteer Brigade**

### **THE FINAL STATEMENT OF THE 46<sup>th</sup> EDITION OF JOSE MARTI INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE (4-22 JULY 2016)**

For 57 years Cuba has been a victim of defamation, distortion and lies conducted by the imperialist controlled mainstream media which puts a lot of stress on discrediting Cuban reality.

We recognize and understand the need for initiating a process to normalize diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States, and we are in solidarity with the efforts made by the Cuban people to construct socialism. At the same time, we will remain vigilant together with the Cuban people because we all know the imperialist character of the United States and we are aware of the fact that their intention to destroy the Cuban socialism has never changed.

Despite the recent improvement in American Cuban relations, this small but great Caribbean island continues to confront an illegal, genocide, and an obsolete economic, commercial and financial blockade that has forced its people to resist with creativity against the lack of consumer goods, food and the prohibition to import and export new technologies.

In spite of all the adversities, Cuba is a country that guarantees education, public health and social security, showing a high standard of living an undeniable development in different sectors of its economy. In addition, Cuban people make a tremendous amount of efforts to update the socialist economic model, and we are proud of supporting their struggle.

The 46<sup>th</sup> edition of the European Brigade has taken place during the commemoration of the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the heroic deed, which was the assault on Moncada and Carlos M. de Céspedes barracks and the celebration of the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, who is a real symbol of our people's pride.

For all these reasons, we, the 98 members of the 46<sup>th</sup> contingent of José Martí European Brigade from 15 countries, declare our support for the following aims:

- An end to the criminal, economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba but considered obsolete, inhumane, and illegal.
- Dismantling of the military base in Guantanamo and returning the illegally occupied territory to its legitimate owners.
- An end to the political and ideological subversion campaigns promoted by monopolies that control the mainstream media.

We will also promise the following:

- Based on our living experiences during our stay at Julio A. Mella camp in Caimito, we are committed to disseminating the spirit of the Cuban people and their commitment to continue struggling for the work of the Revolution.
- We will promote the volunteer working brigades organized by ICAP in order to enable people to learn about the reality of Cuba and its people's effort to build a moral equal and just society despite the present economic challenges.
- We demand the end of the US economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba and we energetically oppose attempts to get our countries involved in hostile, cruel politics against Cuba.
- We demand the closure of the US Naval base in Guantanamo and the return of the illegally occupied territory.
- We will denounce with all our energy in all our forums the imperialist intention to deny Cuba its right to independence, sovereignty, and self-determination.
- We will support all the actions developed by solidarity organizations from our countries in favor of Cuba.
- We will promote the European solidarity meeting with Cuba in Sweden in November 2016.

Long live friendship and solidarity among all the countries in the world!

Hasta la Victoria Siempre! Venceremos! (We shall overcome!)

Caimito, Artemisa, 22 July 2016

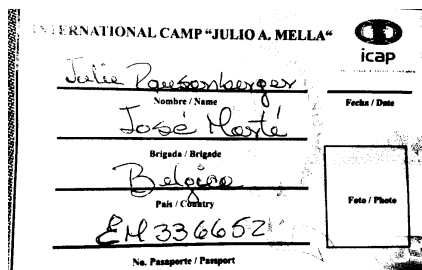
## 7.7 Volunteer Memberships in Solidarity Movements


The volunteers were members of Associação Amizade Portugal Cuba, Greek-Cuban Association of Solidarity and Friendship, Association France-Cuba, Iniciativa Cuba Socialista & ABVV internationale solidariteitsprojecten, Danish-Cuban Association, Associazione di Amicizia Italia-Cuba, Cuban Solidarity Campaign (UK), Svensk-Kubanska Föreningen, José Martí Cuba-Turkey Friendship Association, Russia-Cuba Friendship Association (SARC), or Cuba Support Group Ireland.

 <p><a href="http://www.italia-cuba.it">http://www.italia-cuba.it</a></p>	 <p><a href="http://www.hispanocubana.com">http://www.hispanocubana.com</a></p>	 <p><a href="http://www.kubadostluk.org">http://www.kubadostluk.org</a></p>
 <p><a href="http://www.cubavenner.dk/">http://www.cubavenner.dk/</a></p>	 <p><a href="http://www.associacaodeamizadeportugalcula.com">www.associacaodeamizadeportugalcula.com</a></p>	 <p><a href="https://www.facebook.com/Cuba-Greece-Friendship-Association-1681220822147006/">https://www.facebook.com/Cuba-Greece-Friendship-Association-1681220822147006/</a></p>
 <p><a href="http://www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk">http://www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk</a></p>	 <p><a href="http://www.francecuba.org">http://www.francecuba.org</a></p>	 <p><a href="http://cubasupport.com/">http://cubasupport.com/</a></p>

 <p>Svensk-Kubanska Foreningen  <a href="http://www.svensk-kubanska.se">http://www.svensk-kubanska.se</a></p>	 <p><b>CUBANISMO</b>.BE      Iniciativa Cuba Socialista  <a href="http://cubanismo.be/nl">http://cubanismo.be/nl</a></p>	 <p><b>ABVV</b>  <b>Samen sterk</b>  <a href="http://www.accc.be/nl">http://www.accc.be/nl</a></p>
 <p><b>Germany-Cuba Friendship Association</b>  <b>Asociación de Amistad Alemania – Cuba</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.fgbrdkuba.de/cuba-soli/txt/about-ourselves.html">http://www.fgbrdkuba.de/cuba-soli/txt/about-ourselves.html</a></p>		
 <p>ASC/VSC Vereinigung Schweiz-Cuba      ASC Association Suisse-Cuba      ASC Associazione Svizzera-Cuba      ASC Asociación Suiza-Cuba</p> <p><a href="http://www.cuba-si.ch/fr/">http://www.cuba-si.ch/fr/</a></p>		
<p>ОБЩЕСТВО РОССИЙСКО-КУБАНСКОЙ ДРУЖБЫ  <b>Всегда до победы!</b></p>  <p>SOCIEDAD DE LA AMISTAD RUSO-CUBANA  <b>¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre!</b></p> <p><a href="https://brigadaeuropeajm.wordpress.com/">https://brigadaeuropeajm.wordpress.com/</a></p>		

## 7.8 The CIJAM identity card



INTERNATIONAL CAMP "JULIO A. MELLA" 

Julie Paetzschberger  
 Nombre / Name

Jose Hoste  
 Fecha / Date

Belgium  
 Brigada / Brigade

Belgium  
 País / Country

EM 336652  
 No. Pasaporte / Passport

Foto / Photo

## 7.9 Photographical Testimony of the Brigade



Photo 1: 'Welcome Friends of Cuba' sign at the camp entrance



Photo 2: Dormitories and environment at the *campamento*





Photo 3: Interior of an 8-bed dormitory at the *campamento*



Photo 4: Common area near *La Piragua* bar



Photo 5: Food pick-up station in the dining room



Photo 6: Daily reunion at 7.00 AM before work at the camp center



Photo 7: Program evaluation meeting with ICAP



Photo 8: Late night entertainment at the *campamento*





Photo 9: Cuban security guards in front of the mural paintings



Photo 10: *Socialism or Death* mural painting at the camp



Photo 11: *Solidarity brought them home!* mural painting at the camp



Photo 12: Conference at the CIJAM conference center



Photo 13: *Brigadista* and Cuban staff member talking





Photo 14: Cuban staff members cutting fruit in the kitchen



Photo 15: Voluntourists working in the fields near Caimito



Photo 16: Voluntourists getting of the *camioneta* to go working



Photo 17: Group picture of the voluntourists after work





Photo 18: Group picture of the volunteers and Cubans after work



Photo 19: Cuban farmer giving carrots to voluntourists to thank them



Photo 20: Cuban farmer (*guajira*) at work in the fields



Photo 21: Volunteers ready to go back to the camp in a *camioneta*